The Nation.

October 14, 1991 $1.75 U.S./$2.25 Canada

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EDITORIAL

THEY'VE GOT A LITTLE LIST

"We're not afraid of people with ideas," proclaimed Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan last week, praising Congress's approval of a bill requiring the State Department to purge a secret list of 310,000 foreign nationals whose ideas apparently once terrified us—so much so that our government barred them even from visiting the United States. The list is being purged because last year Congress repealed much of the McCarran-Walter Act, the McCarthy-era law that excluded foreign nationals for such crimes as associating with a group that "displayed" literature advocating "world Communism."

Senator Moynihan should have said, "We're not afraid of people with *certain* ideas." Under the bill, the State Department can still maintain a secret list; it will simply change the labels from "Communist" to "terrorist." "Terrorist," in the government's view, includes anyone who has ever solicited money for any national liberation movement that has ever engaged in a violent act, even if the money was raised and used for purely humanitarian reasons.

The State Department won't even have to change its labels for tens of thousands on the list; the bill permits it to continue to list and exclude Communists who seek to come here to live permanently. Apparently *some* Communists continue to scare us. And the Administration is fighting to maintain absolute secrecy for all visa denials, so neither Congress nor the excluded person will be able to challenge its determination.

The bill, like the Senator's comment, misses the point. The First Amendment is supposed to protect those whose ideas we *are* afraid of, not just those whose ideas we can dismiss as nonthreatening for the time being. As long as we continue to exclude people solely for their political associations, we have little to celebrate. Our fears may have been mollified, but our principles remain tarnished.

A PEOPLE'S FRANK
Victor Navasky

GIVE CHILDREN THE VOTE
Vita Wallace

DEATH OF THE DREAM
Daniel Singer

BUSH'S RACISM
Fred Powledge

JOHN DEWEY REVISITED
James Miller

POSTURBAN AMERICA
Jane Holtz Kay

FIRE IN THE BALKANS

YUGOSLAVIA NOW—EUROPE TOMORROW?

SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ

Ljubljana, Yugoslavia

In my mind, I see it again and again, that house without a roof. The television camera first showed a newly painted low building from the outside, then entered the bedroom. There were two beds made up with sheets, blankets, pillows and all; the curtains still hung at the windows with their shattered glass. But the roof was missing, as if someone had forgotten to put it there. Or simply took it away. Only a few pieces of brick and a layer of fine dust over the room showed that the roof had been there once—perhaps only a couple of hours before that scene was shot.

That bedroom with its two neat beds, helpless and exposed, is a picture of our life now: the perversity of war that turns our guts inside out, ripping away all intimacy, turning our life into an empty shell. It was filmed somewhere in Croatia, in one of the cities bombed by the federal army, maybe in Osijek, Vukovar, Vinkovci or Gospic. It could also have been filmed in one of the ancient cities on the Adriatic coast, like Zadar or Split—or Sibenik, whose 600-year-old cathedral has a hole because it has been bombed too. Almost all Croatia has been bombed by now. The war that many expected, a few understood and no one could anticipate the outcome of became more bloody, more merciless, more cruel with each passing day. Its victims are accorded no importance, the total number of dead and wounded is still unknown, the devastation immense.

One would think that one war in this country would be enough. And I don't mean World War II; I mean the so-

(*Continued on Page 432*)

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LETTERS.

POPULIST PAC MAN

Somerville, Mass.
With regard to David Corn's article on Tom Harkin's candidacy, "What Harkin May Herald" [July 29/Aug. 5], your readers should know that Tom Harkin is the third-highest all-time recipient of campaign contributions from pro-Israel political action committees. The statistics I use come from the April *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. In receiving a total of $359,980 in contributions from 1978 through 1990, he ranks behind Paul Simon of Illinois ($580,794) and Carl Levin of Michigan ($422,038). This places him ahead of Alan Cranston, Frank Lautenberg, Howard Metzenbaum, Tom Daschle and former Senator Rudy Boschwitz. In 1989-90 alone, Harkin received the second-largest sum of PAC money, $245,550, ranking behind Paul Simon ($262,655) in pro-Israel largesse.

With his so-called populist campaign so dependent on such beneficence, it makes one wonder just how Tom will come down on the very critical issue of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. I think his grass-roots credentials have been tainted by a nation whose human rights record leaves much to be desired.

James Toth

GENTLEMEN PREFERRED BLONDES

Washington
Thanks for the editorial "Emerson, Thomas" [July 29/Aug. 5] recalling that I "proceeded to eviscerate HUAC" in a lecture at Yale Law School back in the late 1950s. But, sadly, your statement that "the house was packed" because "Arthur Miller was slated to introduce" me and might bring along his wife, Marilyn Monroe, was only one of your many misstatements. I recognize the temptation to liven up a dull piece of history with a Marilyn Monroe story, but, as Arthur just confirmed to me on the telephone, neither Miller was ever slated to show up, and the house was sparse indeed.

If *The Nation* had checked its story with me, I could have told a Marilyn story actually connected with that lecture on HUAC. I spoke in New Haven that night because our son Carl was lonesome at a prep school in the area, and I thought that, after the lecture, spending the day with Arthur and Marilyn would cheer him up. And a lovely day it was. Unfortunately, we didn't finish dinner until after Carl was due back, so Marilyn offered to ride to Carl's school with us and make the necessary excuses. Arthur vetoed the ploy, saying, "We're saving you until Carl burns down the gym." Truth can be more fun than fiction.

Joe Rauh

SOME LIKED IT HOT

Kennett Square, Pa.
Many thanks for recalling Tom Emerson's stirring defense of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. As president of the Yale Law Forum, which was responsible for bringing guest speakers to the law school, I remember awaiting the arrival of Miller and the glamorous Marilyn Monroe with great anticipation. But when they failed to show, it occurred to me that Professor Emerson's artful put-down of Joe Rauh's gratuitous put-down of the E.C.L.C. was, to a young law student, sexier by far than Monroe would ever be. My only regret is that space did not allow you to recall the many ways he served as a role model for those of us who were not interested in practicing corporate law.

Jack Waltuch

MISFITS

Omaha, Neb.
The Nation used its tribute to the late Thomas Emerson to grind an old ax about the A.C.L.U. and the cold war, saying the E.C.L.C. was founded in 1951 "precisely because the American Civil Liberties Union had qualms about defending the rights of Communists and those on the Attorney General's list." While the A.C.L.U. did some truly shameful things during the cold war (its failure to challenge the F.B.I. being the worst), it also fought every anticommunist measure at the federal, state and local levels. It did defend the rights of Communists. The *Dennis* case is but one example: The A.C.L.U. issued public protests and filed briefs at every possible stage of the case.

Nor was the E.C.L.C.'s performance so impeccable. The A.C.L.U. was always the more active opponent of cold war measures. Lloyd Barenblatt's important First Amendment challenge to HUAC is a good case in point. Barenblatt had approached the E.C.L.C. but rejected it because of its manipulative fundraising scheme: continuing to fundraise around a First Amendment challenge to HUAC when it had no active case. The A.C.L.U. represented Barenblatt before the Supreme Court. There were many failures of nerve during the cold war, and the A.C.L.U. deserves its share of criticism. But the full story is far more complex than the "bad A.C.L.U./good E.C.L.C." version advanced by *The Nation*.

Samuel Walker

It's not ax grinding to recall that during the cold war years the A.C.L.U. changed its position on the right of unions to disqualify Communists from running for office, failed to protest the refusal of the government to give permanent employment status to Communists and deferred representing Communists until the appeal stage. When the philosopher Corliss Lamont, one of its own board members, refused to cooperate with the McCarthy committee, the A.C.L.U. took so long to come to his defense that Osmond Fraenkel called it "a shabby business." Lamont resigned from the A.C.L.U. and became a principal backer of the E.C.L.C. —The Editors

FILTHY LUCRE

Binghamton, N.Y.
The editors' note accompanying Gore Vidal's excellent article "The Essential Mencken" [Aug. 26/Sept. 2] mentions that one of the Mencken award winners "angrily handed back" his award following publication of Mencken's diaries. When I was in Baltimore last year for the annual Mencken award luncheon, I mentioned the incident to the Baltimore *Sun*'s managing editor, who told me that while the man had indeed returned his plaque, he had not returned the $2,500 cash prize.

Incidentally, as a two-time winner of the Mencken award, I did not feel the least bit inclined to give back either the plaques or the money. Not all of us consigned Mencken's works and reputation to the pyre.

David Rossie

MENCKEN AND 'NEGROES'

Brooklyn, N.Y.
Gore Vidal's admirable and bracing defense of H.L. Mencken leaves out one vital, oft-neglected area of the sage's enlightenment: his support of African-American—"Negro," I believe, was the P.C. term in his heyday—writers. He published W.E.B. Du Bois, was a patron of Walter White and George Schuyler (who was later an archconservative, but still Mencken gave his iconoclasm room to move when no one else would) and inspired Richard Wright to use words, as Wright would put it, "as one would use a club."

Gene Seymour

MENCKENIANA

Edinburg, Tex.
I can attest to the veracity of several of Gore Vidal's observations. They took me back to junior high school days in 1927, when Mencken's presence was an underground introduction by our English teacher and carrying *The American Mercury* around was a mark of distinction. I liked the beautiful printing, its smelly green cover and that it would lie flat when opened, its leaves being sewn in the spine.

Mencken made comments that puzzled me in an editorial, and it drove me to write him a letter. It was tough to compose, and I lacked proper writing materials. I was forced to write on notebook paper using Mother's bluing instead of ink.

I expected no reply, but one came in a few days, addressing me as "Esquire." It said: "I'll be glad to tell you the next time you are in New York. Unluckily, the postal laws make it impossible for me to send you the facts by mail," and was signed in the illegible handwriting of the notorious editor. Mencken was pulling my leg ("revel[ing] in absurdity," according to Vidal).

Not long ago I sent this story to an editor at one of our leading newspapers, who said that it made no sense—further proof of Vidal's observation: "Today, Mencken's . . . deadpan hyperboles are very difficult even for 'educated' Americans to deal with, and are Sanskrit to the generality."

Carl C. Wright

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words please.

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Illustrations by D.B. Johnson

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Manuscripts: Address to "The Editor." Not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless accompanied by addressed, stamped envelopes.

Publisher, Arthur L. Carter

Associate Publisher and General Manager, Neil Black; *Associate Publisher and Advertising Director*, Chris Calhoun; *Classified Advertising Director*, Gary Pomerantz; *Business Manager*, Ann B. Epstein; *Bookkeepers*, Ivor A. Richardson, Shirleathia Watson; *Art/Production Manager*, Jane Sharples; *Production*, Carlos Durazo, Sandy McCroskey; *Circulation Manager*, Cookee V. Klein; *Receptionists*, Greta Loell, Vivette Dhanukdhari; *Data Entry and Mail Coordinator*, John Holtz; *Administrative Secretary*, Shirley Sulat; *Nation Associates Coordinators*, Peter Rothberg, Peter Siskind; *Permissions and Back Issues*, Josh Neufeld; *Publicity and Special Projects Director*, Peter G. Meyer.

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, Inc.

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72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. (212) 242-8400. *Washington Bureau:* Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. *Subscription Price*: 1 year, $44; 2 years, $75. Add $18 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Missed issues must be claimed within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $4 prepaid ($5 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. This issue went to press on September 26.

EDITORIALS.

Bush's Bête Noire

President Bush had such a good time bashing Saddam Hussein in the desert last winter that he would like another go-round. The excuse this time is Saddam's dilatory and, indeed, provocative response to U.S. and U.N. demands for full access to and disclosure of Iraq's nuclear weapons program. United Nations inspectors want to helicopter around the country. Although Saddam appeared to withdraw his objections, the conflict briefly escalated when Iraqi soldiers surrounded a bus holding inspectors who had seized documents relating to the weapons program.

There are any number of ways to deal with Saddam's recalcitrance, even with his hostility. Bush's favorite tactic is threat of aggression, and he is using it for self-serving and inappropriate reasons. Bush's campaign against Iraq cannot be separated from his campaign for re-election. With no domestic program or platform of accomplishments upon which to run, he understandably must highlight his genius as world beater

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and world leader. In fact, he's already worried about his record on the home front. Last month he began defending his underachievements even before the Democrats attacked.

If there is anything in foreign policy that Bush feels vulnerable about, it is the continued existence of Saddam Hussein on this planet otherwise dominated by Washington. It is ironic that Bush should be faulted for wimpery in Iraq after so much blood was shed, so many "turkeys" shot. But Democrats who last winter were calling for patience and diplomacy are now screaming for Saddam's head. Bush must now agree with his predecessors Kennedy and Carter: Life is unfair.

Bush is also committed to the continued projection of U.S. military power in the Middle East. Now that the Soviets (or whatever one calls them) have retired from the *outre-mer*, the United States has clear sailing to send troops wherever it likes (with the possible exception of Subic Bay). With the standoff in Baghdad, Bush rattled off a load of Patriot missiles, jets and a carrier group to the gulf region, and more arms will follow. Eastern Turkey is little more than an extension of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Kuwait now has the military treaty with the United States it lacked a year ago. And all this is only tangentially relevant to Saddam's bad manners.

Bush brought up his problems with Iraq at the U.N. General Assembly in September, for the inspection of Iraq's weapons is supposed to be a U.N. activity. That being true, the U.N. should use its own means of mobilizing international pressure to achieve the denuclearization of Iraq rather than sheepishly allowing Bush to pursue his own political and military agenda. And while they're at it, U.N. members might consider ways to denuclearize other aggressive powers in the region, namely Israel and Pakistan.

U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has proven unequal to the task of leading the international community in some semblance of an independent policy—independent, that is, of the sole superpower in the world body. But his term is ending, and his successor should be chosen for his ability to construct a coalition that can at least put up an argument, if not a fight, with Washington. In the absence of a traditional kind of counter to American ambitions in the world, at least it may be possible to build an alternative that a strong U.N. secretary general could lead.

Yugoslavia

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

called ten-day war in Slovenia this past June and July when Slovenia defeated the federal army. It was the beginning of the European Community's involvement, or rather its fear. Suddenly it became clear that if the war continued it would explode in the face of the united Europe of 1992. So troikas of foreign ministers flew all over the country that is still called Yugoslavia on the world map. After several unsuccessful attempts, the Brioni treaty was finally signed in July. It called for a cease-fire, a three-month moratorium on all decisions about the independence of Slovenia and Croatia (the two "problematic" republics that wanted to secede), withdrawal of the federal army from Slovenian territory, no violent change of borders and a peaceful solution to what was optimistically called a "conflict." A good start for peace negotiations, but only if the parties want to negotiate. That was not at all certain.

At that time the E.C. was apparently the only side that wanted negotiations and peace, afraid the fire already burning on the outskirts of a country falling apart would spread. Albania unofficially expressed interest in uniting with the Serbian province of Kosovo; Greeks and Bulgarians became interested in Macedonia; Italians at one point mentioned their former provinces, ceded to Yugoslavia after World War II.

Others who should be interested in peace, like Serbia, the federal army generals and Croatia, were talking peace while preparing for war—each for a different kind of war. Serbia said it wanted war to "protect its minority from Croatian genocide," but in fact it wished to form Greater Serbia, the new state that would swallow up the biggest part of Yugoslavia. The rebels of the so-called Krajina region in Croatia, populated by a Serbian majority who were the first to cause trouble by erecting barricades and demanding cultural and political autonomy (and at war for a year already), wanted to separate from Croatia and become part of Serbia. The army, although claiming that it was only separating the two sides, in fact became pro-Serb and started to serve Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's political designs. And the Croats prepared to defend their southeast in order not to be eaten up by Serbia. They were determined to achieve independence at all costs. Or as their former minister of defense put it in the middle of peace negotiations, independence will "take as many lives as are needed."

So the short war in Slovenia was only an hors d'oeuvre compared with the elaborate menu the federal army and the Serbian government had prepared for Croatia. In no time at all attacks and counterattacks in Croatia escalated to the point that real war was going on, with hundreds dead, thousands wounded and hundreds of thousands in exile.

Yet war was not declared, and in futile negotiations on the level of the federal presidency or with E.C. mediators each side stubbornly held its position. During the summer each declaration of a cease-fire was followed by a more violent attack by the federal army, including the bombing of Croatian cities. For its part, Croatia tried to arm itself—illegally, because of an E.C. ban on arms sales. At the same time, together with Slovenia, it engaged in lively diplomacy aimed at winning quick international recognition of its independence. In fact, in mid-August Croatian newspapers proclaimed euphorically that recognition of Croatia by Austria, Germany and Italy "is only a matter of days, perhaps even hours." But hours passed, then days, then weeks, and Croatia wasn't recognized.

What was worse, the positions of the European countries shifted considerably. Germany and Italy split with France and Britain over the recognition of the two republics. French President François Mitterrand said recognizing them would mean seventeen new states in Europe, and the E.C. wouldn't like to cope with that.

Around the first of September the E.C. concluded that its members should avoid the threat to their unity that recognition of Slovenia and Croatia would pose and said it would

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pursue only diplomatic and eventually economic (but not military) measures to help solve the conflict, which had assumed the dimensions of a total war in Croatia. Britain's Lord Carrington, an expert in conflict resolution, entered the fray, but after a few attempts at peace negotiations wasn't very optimistic. And for a good reason: Immediately after he, Milosevic, Gen. Veljko Kadijevic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman signed the treaty in Igalo in mid-September, Croatia became the target of the worst army attack ever. Either none of the people who signed the agreement had the authority to stop the wildfire, or they were consciously cheating one another and the world. When Lord Carrington's negotiations and the peace conferences in The Hague brought no results, it became clear that Europe is weak, frightened, contradictory in its positions, indecisive and slow.

But the world cannot sit and wait while the E.C. dithers. The state of Yugoslavia, with its six republics and two autonomous provinces, has ceased to exist. Four of the six republics have already held referendums calling for independence. It is only a matter of time before the pressure from within will be so great that Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina will demand recognition from Europe too. The collective federal presidency doesn't even meet anymore; the President, Stipe Mesic, who is also the supreme commander of the army, has no authority to order a cease-fire, or anything else for that matter. The army generals, in supporting Milosevic, are acting on their own, in a kind of undeclared putsch. The prime minister of the nonexistent state tried to replace General Kadijevic because of proof that he plotted a coup with the Soviet generals who led the putsch in the U.S.S.R., but Kadijevic didn't resign and no one could force him to. The only sign that we formally are citizens of the same country is that we use the same currency—dinars, worth less and less.

In the meantime, here is what happened in Croatia during only a couple of months of undeclared war: Almost all cities and towns except Rijeka and Zagreb have been bombed, seaports blocked, airports either closed, destroyed or seized by the army. There are officially more than 450 dead soldiers and civilians on the Croat side (the other side never gives out numbers), but the unofficial numbers are much, much higher. There are several thousand wounded, about 300,000 exiles in Croatia from its eastern and southern areas and about 50,000 in Austria, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. The extent of the material devastation—destroyed buildings, hospitals, schools, farms and factories—is still unknown. About sixty churches and more than a hundred cultural treasures have been damaged or demolished. Eight journalists have been killed (more than in Vietnam or the gulf war), two have disappeared and the number of wounded is unknown because no one counts them. In some Croatian villages there have been massacres of civilians, mostly old people, with cruelty unseen since World War II. Throats were slit, chests cut open and hearts taken out, eyes poked out, arms and legs cut off.

But let's not grieve over the fact that this is happening in Europe today. Let's be cold and cynical—as politicians are—and speak about political interests. Democracy and victims of the war are much less important for Croats (and Slovenians) than their independence, for which their governments seem to be prepared to sacrifice many more lives. Serbia is not protecting its minority in Croatia; it is using them as an excuse to wage war for Greater Serbia, the dominant state of the territory of the former Yugoslavia. And the federal army doesn't want to lose its 80 percent share of the federal budget, which over the past forty-five years made it grow into the military superpower of the Balkans.

The fact is, the dilemma for the E.C. nations comes down to a rather simple either/or: Either they will support a Greater Serbia that dominates the states around it, or they will support the existence of a few smaller states. Europe cannot act like a virgin anymore; it must decide if it wants peace in the Balkans and in its backyard. Maybe peace is still possible if all the republics (not only Croatia and Slovenia) are recognized within their existing borders. In any case, a return to the prewar status quo is no longer possible.

And what about the United States? Is this superpower just standing aside and letting the European countries deal with the Balkans because it's their problem? Is the United States really so innocent? A long history of involvement all around the world makes this hypothesis suspect: In what world crisis has the United States not had its fingers? There is widespread belief here that the United States is the key to solving the Balkan problem. If we look again at political interests, who is to profit from the destabilization of Europe and the split in the E.C.? The United States has much to gain economically and militarily from a weakened Europe. Serbia, so it seems, is in effect playing Trojan horse in this political gamble.

One thing is sure: Europe cannot isolate Yugoslavia behind some new Berlin wall and let us kill one another. The wildfire has already spread too far. The longer the E.C. hesitates, the more it loses and the United States gains. And the eventual catastrophe of European politics in the Balkans threatens to bring a much bigger catastrophe to the world.

Slavenka Drakulić is a journalist and novelist who in normal times lives in Zagreb.

COMING UP

Water Fights: Aborigines vs. Dams
By Steve Turner and Todd Nachowitz

★ Gates Gets The Job

Gates gets the job. Before they bestow it,
Senators say this Gates is a poet,
Rendering moot the facts that could blow it:
What did he know, and when did he know it?

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Twelve Stepping

My hope all along was that the Senate would do the right thing and confirm Clarence Thomas as Director of Central Intelligence and put Robert Gates on the Supreme Court. The C.I.A. would be an ideal harbor for a man of eccentric ideology like Thomas. Gates would blend in on the highest bench somewhere between Kennedy and Scalia.

Thomas drives a late-model Corvette, and Gates arrived in Washington in 1966 driving a 1965 Mustang, which he promptly got rid of, presumably on the grounds that it might offend one of the superiors whom it has been his life's mission to flatter. The cars tell the story.

These confirmation hearings have become an extension of Alcoholics Anonymous. Apologize a couple of times and all is forgiven. "My name is Bob G. and I'm a pathological liar. I was brought into the C.I.A. in the mid-1960s by Ray Cline, who later founded C.I.A. Agents for Bush. In 1974 I was installed in the N.S.C. to help conceal Kissinger's back-channel diplomacy from the bureaucracy.

"I'm a consummate brown-noser, trustworthy hireling of criminals and mass murderers, concealer of foul deeds. I lasted at the N.S.C. through Nixon to Carter, returning to the C.I.A. in 1979, just in time to start issuing threat inflations about the Soviet Union, thus justifying the late Carter and Reagan hikes in defense spending.

"By 1985 I had sufficiently ingratiated myself with C.I.A. Director Casey and with the sinister N.S.A. and C.I.A. executive Bobby Ray Inman, to be on track for Deputy Director of Central Intelligence. By July 1986, when the Boland amendment was dead, I got memos from N.S.C. Director Poindexter telling me that the C.I.A. should take over the illegal *contra* assets (i.e., the Iran arms money). I have lied repeatedly about my knowledge of those memos in two sets of subsequent confirmation hearings.

"In August 1986 C.I.A. analyst Charles Allen told me about Iran's anger at being overcharged for arms and about the destiny of this money. Richard Kerr, another C.I.A. officer, now Acting Director, told me more. About these conversations I have also lied. In fact, I was the C.I.A. officer providing the rationale for sending arms to Iran, persuading the Iranians by bogus estimates of Soviet intentions that they needed the arms. To advance my career with the Reagan gang, I insisted the C.I.A. sign on to the absurd K.G.B. Pope plot theory.

"Throughout 1985 and 1986 I was one of sixteen people in the intelligence apparat who were sent 168 reports from the N.S.A., totaling 417 pages, detailing all the secret arms negotiations with the Iranians. From the end of my aborted confirmation hearings in 1987, I was at the center of the cover-up of Contragate. Then I went back to the N.S.C. under Scowcroft and was on a committee arbitrating disputes between different government agencies. In this capacity I assisted in the tilt toward Iraq.

"I apologize for all the bad things I have done. I acknowledge the existence of a power higher than myself and I promise to clean up. Thank you."

Select Committee Chair Boren: "Thank you, Bob G., the committee is impressed with your forthright testimony. Confirmed!"

The Bind That Ties: Missionary Position

American reporters have been fanning out across Mother Russia, divining rods extended to gauge the motions of the Slavic soul. Serge Schmemann of *The New York Times* brooded in the September 1 edition that "there is something immutable in the Russian vacillation between brief explosions of energy and stretches of lethargy. Some attribute it to the northern climate, which imposes a cycle of feverish labor in the brief summers, followed by long months of hibernation. Others have traced it to the practice of infant swaddling, with long stretches of virtual immobility punctuated by moments of total indulgence."

This is a most welcome return of diaperology. Back in the good old days when the Russians issued vetoes in the U.N. Security Council, shrinks on retainer from the U.S. State Department or the C.I.A. used to write solemn articles saying that the "Nyet Factor" could best be explained by the swaddling custom, which presumably in Council sessions rendered the Soviet delegation immobile with tedium punctuated by the total indulgence of shouting Nyet in a forbidding manner.

Schmemann was trailed closely by Lance Morrow of *Time*, who on September 9 took the view that

> America and the Soviet Union can be intriguing negative images of each other. The U.S. is triumphant materialism. Russia has a spiritual depth and resonance. V.S. Pritchett has written of "the Romantic belief in the supreme value of suffering which is often said to be fundamental among Slavs. Prison has the monastic lure." Americans are virtually addicted to not suffering, to the un-Russian idea of the pursuit of happiness.

No folly is beyond the reach of cultural anthropology. During World War II Ruth Benedict was commissioned by the U.S. government to write a book about Siam. She'd never been there but pressed on regardless, remarking in one of her early chapters that much in Siam's character could be explained by the fact that in early childhood the Siamese had license to manipulate their genitals freely.

Not so long ago I discussed the anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon's estimate of the Amazonian Yanomami as being essentially angry. I suggested that this anger might simply have been their extreme irritation at Chagnon's presence and intrusive questions. This elicited a letter of furious denunciation from David Landon, supporting Chagnon while disclosing: "As missionaries, we were constrained to live without weapons. We had always to weigh the consequences of our actions. We had always to remember that some piddling altercation over the price of a machete or shirt could escalate into a shooting match, so we had to be emotionally prepared to go all the way to the end every time we took a position on something. . . . It is entirely probable that the tribe will be wiped out, or at least decimated, by their contacts with the 'civilized' people. . . .

"When New Tribes Mission began working with them in

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1953, they were so isolated that, although they lived in a sea of anopheles mosquitos, there was no malaria. We missionaries took our atabrine and aralen religiously, but the Venezuelans were not so careful. After we had 'pacified' the area, they began coming up the Orinoco to seek lumber, and fornicating with the women, and in 1959 some fool didn't take his aralen, and an anopheles bit him, and the devil was loose. In the year after that happened, fifty percent of the population of the villages on the Orinoco died. The mortality was so heavy and the disease so prevalent, that the living were too few and too weak to cut firewood for funeral pyres for the dead. . . .

"I suppose your readers will respond with a big 'so what' but there does exist a translation of the New Testament in Yanomamö, which I had a small part in bringing into being, and a small Christian population, on the Padamo River, which offers some hope of tribal survival. They are literate in their own language, and speak and probably read and write Spanish. The best hope for the survival of the culture is probably on the Venezuelan side, where they are surrounded and supported by other tribes with a large Christian population, and the few New Tribes Missionaries who are still permitted into the area by the Venezuelan government.

"If this is politically incorrect speech, let somebody make the most of it. We missionaries have been the butt of so many jibes about 'destroying the native culture' that it is good to see someone else getting tarred with that brush. It is time to realize that the twentieth century missionary is actually busy preserving all that is valuable in the native culture, introducing only those spiritual elements which are necessary to enable the indigene to cope with the demonized 'civilizado.' "

Fresh Tripe From Doug

In a typically childish (he dignifies himself with the term "anarchist") column in *The Village Voice* for September 24 Doug Ireland offered some abuse of *The Nation* and myself along with news that upon the August events in the Soviet Union "there was much hailing of the coup in Havana and Hanoi." His information on Havana presumably came from a White House press conference of August 20, in which Bush said, "It is ironic that only a handful of countries, predictably extreme countries, have supported what's happening in Moscow. I think of Libya, I think of Iraq, and I think of Cuba. These are renegades."

A moment's reflection would have told Ireland that Cuba would have been very foolish indeed to take any position on the coup, given its reliance on Soviet aid and the uncertainty of the situation. A little checking would have instructed him that on August 20 the Cuban government issued a statement on the coup which began, "The events that have taken place in the Soviet Union in the last two days have aroused profound worry in the people and the government of Cuba." The statement emphasized the Gang of Eight's assertion that their measures "don't affect the international obligations assumed by the Soviet Union in conformity with its treaties and binding agreements, and they affirmed that the Soviet Union will continue developing its relations with all states under universally recognized principles of good neighborliness, 'equality,' mutual advantage and noninterference in the affairs of other nations." It closed with the desire that "the Soviet people can overcome their difficulties in peace," adding that "Yanqui imperialism, aspiring to serve as an international policeman and to own the world, has no right to take advantage of this sad situation. We leave it to the Soviets themselves, with their noble patriotism, to resolve the deep crisis in which they are caught with the necessary equanimity and wisdom. We trust them. For our people we will continue summarizing the information we receive about the events with total objectivity." *The Economist* for September 14 pointed out that by taking no position "Cuba managed to avoid doing itself too much harm."

A day after the coup, according to a NewsGrid dispatch from Hanoi, "Vietnam reacted cautiously to the news, saying it was following events with 'great interest' and hoping that the 'Soviet people would stabilise the situation.' " The Associated Press put it another way: "Vietnam, which has declined to carry out Soviet-style political reforms, did not endorse the move against Gorbachev but indicated its sympathy by reporting only official Soviet accounts of the events, including the claim that Gorbachev had quit for health reasons." Since 1986, Vietnam has had an economic reform program, and the NewsGrid report quoted a "source close to Vietnam leaders" as saying, "They [the Soviets] can't revert to earlier policies, as they must continue with reforms. Even if they do it in different ways it is necessary."

The U.S. press also reported on Gorbachev's supposed health problems and quoted Soviet sources. In its editorial on the second day of the coup *The New York Times* took it as a given that Gorbachev was finished, recounting the high points of his career. And in his first statement on the coup, issued on the morning of August 19, Bush was very delicate, noting, "We expect that the Soviet Union will live up fully to its international obligations, and clearly, any commitments that are outstanding on the part of the West will be judged and acted on in accordance with that statement that the Soviet government must live up to its obligations. . . . I don't know whether to take heart or not from Yanayev's statement that this does not mean turning back the reforms, but there was such a statement made by him." Compare this with the Cuban declaration, which officially took no "heart" from anything Yanayev said. After a day of consultation Bush decided it was O.K. to "condemn the unconstitutional resort to force," having nothing to lose in the process. As Ireland is such a fan of the French, relying on *Libération* for most of his batty ideas about the world, it's interesting to contrast the positions of Cuba and Vietnam with the French government's statement of August 19, saying that the coup was "an important event" and that it was proper to "await clarification of the circumstances of Gorbachev's dismissal, and the measures those dismissing him will take, before assessing the impact of events both in the Soviet Union and in the international arena."

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ C.I.A.: Yes to Iraq, No to Molesters

The confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas and Robert Gates set a new standard for handling controversial presidential appointees. As long as the nominee does not turn into a blithering idiot on the stand, most senators will confer approval, even if, as in the Gates case, he is a "subject" (but not a "target") of a grand jury investigation. Senator Warren Rudman acknowledged that Gates was probably guilty of nonfeasance for his laconic response in 1986 to allegations of Iran/*contra* wrongdoing, but this did not dampen the Senator's enthusiasm.

With the Intelligence Committee vote a done deal, the Gates hearings were mostly window dressing. But they did allow some provocative glimpses into the C.I.A. In his questioning of witnesses, Senator Bill Bradley suggested that the White House may have broken the law by not notifying Congress of a covert action in which the agency, beginning in 1985, passed intelligence to Iraq so as to persuade Saddam Hussein to do some political or military favor for the United States. No details beyond that were disclosed; the matter remains classified. Alan Fiers, the former chief of the C.I.A.'s Central America task force, admitted that the agency had in 1987 violated a law prohibiting it from operating within twenty miles of the Nicaraguan border and that an officer was disciplined for this. Gates himself claimed that during the Reagan years Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger opposed agency estimates that showed Soviet military spending declining. John McMahon, a former deputy director of central intelligence, let slip that within the C.I.A. there are 2,000 analysts; the agency has never released numbers. He also noted that one of Casey's pet projects was convincing U.S. businesses to provide overseas cover for C.I.A. officers.

A most unusual disclosure came when Gates, discussing the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, declared that the C.I.A. does deliver intelligence about criminal activity to the proper authorities. As proof, he cited a procedure he set up in 1986 whereby C.I.A. personnel screening officers, having identified a prospective employee as a child abuser or even a potential molester, pass the name on to law enforcement and social service officials. A cheer for Gates. His agency, accused of lawlessness by Bradley, did not turn in B.C.C.I. to the Justice Department, but it secretly pointed the finger at possible abusers.

■ North: Lies With Dogs

The spirit of Oliver North hung over the Gates proceedings. Much of Gates's testimony concerned his claims that he did not know about key aspects of North's support for the *contras*. North is trying to make his presence felt in Congress in a more direct way. As head of an outfit called Freedom Alliance, North has been griping about the appointment of Ron Dellums to the House Intelligence Committee. In fundraising appeals and letters to Congress, North cited Dellums as an "incredible security risk" for, among other things, associating in some fashion with Communists and for having opposed the Vietnam War. When Representative Pete Stark, a California Democrat, received one of North's missives, he couldn't resist. "Frankly, Colonel, you are full of shit," he wrote back. Stark described North's anti-Dellums campaign as "sick and pathetic." Stark could have reminded North that when North was running his operations out of the White House, he was one of the best leakers of sensitive material in town.

North has been busy. Guardian Technologies, a company he chairs, recently designed a bullet-proof vest for dogs. And his memoirs, co-written with William Novak of *Iacocca* fame, are due in the near future, according to a publishing industry source. But the publisher, HarperCollins, is trying to keep that fact a secret. A HarperCollins spokesperson, in true spook manner, will neither confirm nor deny the report. If the book is indeed on its way, one jacket blurb should come from Fiers's testimony to the Iran/*contra* committees: "I never knew Colonel North to be an absolute liar, but I never took anything he said at face value because I knew that he was bombastic and embellished the record, and threw curves, speed balls and spit balls to get what he wanted."

■ B.C.C.I.: The Desire

The Bank of Credit and Commerce International, quips Jonathan Winer, an aide to Senator John Kerry, is "the financial infrastructure of the twilight zone." Drug dealers, heads of state, intelligence services, arms merchants, all managed to find the right window at B.C.C.I. But B.C.C.I. was more than a shady bank. It was a cult. For a stretch of time, the institution held annual management conferences that promoted New Age twaddle more than financial strategy. In a 1985 letter inviting bank managers to that year's seminar in Vienna, B.C.C.I. president Agha Hasan Abedi promised attendees would be "living in the . . . BCC human energy system and . . . will experience a totally new ecology, the ecology of God's divinity." They would "feel the power and pleasure of US $1 billion in capital fund, US $14.5 billion in assets."

The brochure for the seminar is chock-full of motivational folderol. A little homily titled "A Universe of Faith" is provided for the use of the bank's staff. It starts: "I feel nervous and peaceful, and I feel a sense of joy. . . . BCC is in the process of confirming my faith." It ends: "I know the Major Purpose has energised BCC. It has sustained us through our history and will sustain us in years to come." A section on "The Desire of BCC" observes, "In BCC we have removed the duality of subject and object and we seek to live the oneness of life." This portion also proclaims, "The process of BCC is the process of becoming our souls." Tell that to the depositors who have lost billions. The preparatory material for the seminar's final agenda item—"God, providence, divinity, faith, BCC"—insists, "Words cannot do justice to what we are trying to express. We are left in silence and in humility." And not a peep about Clark Clifford, Manuel Noriega, the C.I.A., the Medellín cartel and Abu Nidal.

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WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYEH NEIER

When Prince Norodom Sihanouk addressed the United Nations on September 26 as the leader of a unified Cambodian delegation that includes Hun Sen from the Phnom Penh government and Khieu Samphan of the Khmer Rouge, he signified the headway made in bringing peace to a country that has been as ravaged by war and oppression in the past two decades as any place on earth. Unfortunately, even if the cease-fire holds, a definitive peace agreement is concluded, U.N.-supervised elections are held and a democratically chosen government takes office, thousands of additional Cambodian civilians will become casualties of the conflict. They will die or lose a limb or two when they go out to gather firewood, harvest rice, fish or herd animals and, in the process, encounter one of the "eternal sentinels"—hundreds of thousands of land mines—left behind by the warring factions. The mines will detonate on contact for many years to come whether there is war or peace, whether the unlucky person who steps on one is a soldier or a peasant, a guerrilla fighter or a child heading for school.

Advocates of arms control focus most of their attention on weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical or biological. By contrast to these, land mines may not seem very important, and the trade in them gets little notice. Typically they kill or maim only one person or a few persons at a time. Yet the pervasive use of mines in a dozen or so of the wars currently under way has made this weapon the characteristic indiscriminate killer of our time. According to a report titled "Land Mines in Cambodia," by Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, at least 6,000 Cambodians suffered amputations in 1990 alone as a result of mine injuries, and in the same year "nearly as many died from loss of blood, undiscovered in the fields, or succumbed to their wounds because no transport was available to get them to medical help." The report says that there are now more than 30,000 amputees in Cambodia and another 5,000 to 6,000 in refugee camps along the Thai border.

Although Cambodia probably ranks first in the world in the proportion of its population that is physically disabled, Afghanistan and Angola do not lag far behind. Other countries in which land mines have been used extensively in internal warfare include Burma, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Mozambique. Also, of course, Iraqis and Kuwaitis will be stepping on mines for a long time to come as a consequence of the gulf war.

There are indirect consequences as well. My colleague Jemera Rone, who has traveled around Angola for Africa Watch interviewing victims of the fifteen-year war between government forces and UNITA, reports that she encountered starvation in traditionally fertile areas of the country. Land mines that were placed in the footpaths to the fields and streams have made it impossible for peasants to sustain themselves by farming. Even though a peace agreement was concluded several months ago, the survival of many Angolans in what should be a rich country depends on the charity of international relief agencies.

Numerous countries have been suppliers of land mines. In Cambodia these include China, the Soviet Union, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. China has trained the Khmer Rouge in the placement of their mines. A uniformed British Army team from the Special Air Services and the Royal Thai Army have trained the K.P.N.L.F. and the A.N.S., the noncommunist resistance forces allied with the Khmer Rouge, in the placement of theirs.

The nations that have profited by supplying these weapons, or that have given them without charge to assist their chosen combatants, have generally demonstrated little interest in sponsoring either mine eradication or medical assistance for the victims. The United States has made an exception in the case of El Salvador, where most of the mines have been planted by the F.M.L.N. guerrillas. In the Salvadoran case, the State Department has regularly denounced the use of land mines, and U.S.A.I.D. has funded programs to rehabilitate victims and provide them with prosthetic devices. The United States has failed to exhibit comparable concern for the victims in Angola, however, where the largest number of land mines were planted by UNITA, the U.S.-backed insurgency, or in Cambodia, where the U.S.-backed forces have done their share of the mining.

Perhaps the most significant measure that could be taken against land mines would be a revision of international law to prohibit their use. Currently, these weapons are supposed to be regulated by a protocol of the 1980 U.N. convention on weapons considered "excessively injurious" and having "indiscriminate effects." Known informally as the land mines protocol, it does not ban mines and booby traps but attempts to restrict their deployment to minimize the harm they cause to civilians. Unfortunately, the rules in the land mines protocol are widely ignored.

What is required in place of the protocol is an outright international prohibition on the use and manufacture of land mines, much like the measure that outlawed poison gas in 1925. Although such a prohibition probably would not be completely effective, it would help to insure that any nation or guerrilla force that violated it by using or supplying such weapons would be stigmatized as a pariah.

The recent agreement by the United States and the Soviet Union to stop supplying weapons to the opposing forces in Afghanistan has raised hopes for an end to another of the conflicts that made the term "cold war" something of a misnomer. Yet it appears that we are entering an era in which wars fought along ethnic or religious lines—as in Yugoslavia, Liberia, the Kurdish areas of Iraq and Turkey or various regions of India—are becoming more frequent. Up to now, land mines have not been widely used in most such conflicts. Yet it seems safe to predict that, in time, these wars will produce additional legions of amputees unless organizations such as the U.N. and the International Committee of the Red Cross take the lead in persuading governments to ban these infernal sentinels.

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ARTICLES.

IMMODEST PROPOSALS—I

A People's Frank

VICTOR NAVASKY

Proposal: a law whereby letters to your representative should not require a stamp on the envelope. That's right. A people's frank. After all, the theory of the Congressional frank is that it will promote public dialogue, that a more informed electorate will be better enabled to govern itself; that, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, communications between elected officials and their constituents should be "free, full and unawed by any" and that this would "give the will of the people the influence it ought to have."

But wait a minute. If the idea of the frank is to give the people "influence" with their representatives, why should it work only one way? Why not make it reciprocal? As columnist Robert Posch wrote in *Direct Marketing Magazine*, a trade journal for direct mailers, "Any politician . . . knows that your daily mail is your stethoscope to hear the heartbeat of your constituents." Why not, as they do in Canada, extend the frank to citizens with an urge to let their representatives know what's in their hearts and on their minds?

As a matter of fact, prior to the passage of the first Post Office Act by the First Congress, our own Continental Congress did just that. Its journal dated Wednesday, November 8, 1775, reads, "Resolved, that all letters to and from delegates of the United Colonies, during the session of Congress, pass, and be carried free of postage . . ." What happened next, as Mark Twain hilariously chronicles in his novel *The Gilded Age*, is that Congress so abused the law (franking their wardrobes and perhaps even a horse under cover of "Pub. Docs.") that the entire privilege was suspended, and when it was reinstated in 1874 the citizen-frank part was forgotten.

The case for what some in Congress have parochially called the "reverse" frank is twofold: First, it could be an antidote to citizen apathy and alienation. That Americans feel disconnected from their government is apparent from low election turnouts, public opinion polls, books like E.J. Dionne Jr.'s recent *Why Americans Hate Politics*, and other analyses and indicators. Totalitarian societies prefer one-way communications systems—that's the way to indoctrinate the masses. But the democratic idea is by definition interactive and thrives on the exchange of ideas, on responsive rather than repressive government. The pen may or may not be mightier than the sword, but perhaps the wielding of enough citizen pens will help inform our representatives on whether any more swords are wanted.

Second, a people's frank will help counter the abuses of the Congressional frank. Much has been written about how PACs and previous campaign finance "reforms" such as spending limits have inadvertently functioned as a sort of incumbency insurance. But outside the direct-mail trade press, little has been said—except by challengers—about how the Congressional frank preserves the Congressional status quo. From 1986 through 1990, for example, House incumbents—many of whom mass-mail as close to Election Day as the law will allow (currently there is a sixty-day moratorium)—averaged a 98 percent re-election rate. The average incumbent saves more on free postage than the average challenger amasses as a total campaign chest, and free postage amounts to more than most incumbents raise from individuals. No wonder challengers demand that either the Congressional frank be abolished or they get an equal, taxpayer-funded bonanza.

The only serious argument against a people's frank is that it would cost too much. The postmaster in the House of Representatives has testified that in 1989, the House alone received more than 260 million pieces of mail from the public, at a cost of approximately $80 million. This amount, of course, does not include the increase in volume that would result from the "free" mailing privilege, but it does provide a ballpark figure. Personally, I believe that a country that spends $183 million on the Voice of America can't afford not to invest in the people's right to be heard by their own representatives.

But the beauty part of the people's frank is that a limited test version can be put in place without costing the taxpayer a nickel. All Congress has to do is declare that one-half of each representative's current frank budget for mass mailings be allocated for citizen replies. For starters, the law could require Congress to enclose franked return envelopes or postcards in every mass mailing. That would temporarily cut one-way mass franked mail in half, and it seems a reasonable way to launch the idea of a reciprocal frank on an experimental basis.

By definition, such an experiment omits the homeless, among others who never hear from their representatives. That's another reason why one hopes that eventually all citizens in a district will have the right to carry on no-cost correspondence with Congress. A potential problem (although it has not been a problem in Canada, where the parliamentary system focuses lobbying efforts on government ministers more than other M.P.s): how to keep national lobbies like the National Rifle Association or for that matter the American Civil Liberties Union from exploiting and overloading a citizen frank with prepackaged materials? Possible solution: Exclude prepackaged materials from the privilege. But those are technical matters—the critical point is that the mails, like the roads and the rivers, are part of the circulatory system of our democracy, and as such ought not always to be required to pay their own way.

In Thomas Pynchon's twenty-five-year-old novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, he describes a society in which a certain number of alienated Americans reserve their true communications for an underground or unofficial mail system. It was, he tells us, "a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery." They used the official government delivery system primarily for "recitations of routine."

If we want to reopen channels of communication between

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those who, like Pynchon's underground mailers, have for all practical purposes dropped out of the system and those charged with running that system, a people's frank should be added to the other reforms required by democracy's agenda. It is no more a panacea for democracy's malaise than are campaign finance reform, universal voter registration, free TV time for all candidates, a "none-of-the-above" option on every ballot and lowering the barriers to third parties. But like these other overdue reforms, a two-way frank, while not a substitute for committed, content-based political activity, can only add zest to the democratic brew.

We call those we send to Washington our representatives. But each citizen is also a representative, a representative of the public interest, and in that capacity should be encouraged to write to, rather than write off, the Beltway. It is probably no coincidence that it was Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great dissenter, who once remarked, "The use of the mails is almost as much a part of free speech as the right to use our tongues." □

IMMODEST PROPOSALS—II

Give Children The Vote

VITA WALLACE

I first became interested in children's rights two years ago, when I learned that several states had passed laws prohibiting high school dropouts from getting driver's licenses. I was outraged, because I believe that children should not be forced to go to school or be penalized if they choose not to, a choice that is certainly the most sensible course for some people.

I am what is called a home schooler. I have never been to school, having always learned at home and in the world around me. Home schooling is absolutely legal, yet as a home schooler, I have had to defend what I consider to be my right to be educated in the ways that make the most sense to me, and so all along I have felt sympathy with people who insist on making choices about how they want to be educated, even if that means choosing not to finish high school. Now this choice is in jeopardy.

Since first learning about the discriminatory laws preventing high school dropouts from getting driver's licenses that have been passed by some state legislatures, I have done a lot of constitutional and historical research that has convinced me that children of all ages must be given the same power to elect their representatives that adults have, or they will continue to be unfairly treated and punished for exercising the few legal options they now have, such as dropping out of high school.

Most people, including children themselves, probably don't realize that children are the most regulated people in the United States. In addition to all the laws affecting adults, including tax laws, children must comply with school attendance laws, child labor laws, and alcohol and cigarette laws. They are denied driver's licenses because of their age, regardless of the dropout issue; they are victims of widespread child abuse; and they are blatantly discriminated against everywhere they go, in libraries, restaurants and movie theaters. They have no way to protect themselves: Usually they cannot hire lawyers or bring cases to court without a guardian, and they are not allowed to vote.

The child labor and compulsory schooling laws were passed by well-meaning people to protect children from exploitation. Child labor laws keep children from being forced to work, and compulsory schooling allows all children to get an education. But the abolition of slavery in 1865 didn't end the exploitation of black people. They needed the right to vote and the ability to bring lawsuits against their employers. Children need those rights too. Without them, laws that force children to go to school and generally do not allow them to work may be necessary to prevent exploitation, but they also take away children's rights as citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In my case, the compulsory education laws severely limited my right to pursue the work that is important to me (which is surely what "the pursuit of happiness" referred to in the Declaration of Independence).

I am 16 now, still not old enough to vote. Like all children, then, the only way I can fight for children's rights is by using my freedom of speech to try to convince adults to fight with me. While I am grateful that I have the right to speak my mind, I believe that it is a grave injustice to deny young people the most effective tool they could have to bring about change in a democracy. For this reason, I suggest that the right of citizens under 18 to vote not be denied or abridged on account of age.

Many people argue that it would be dangerous to let loose on society a large group of new voters who might not vote sensibly. They mean that children might not vote for the right candidates. The essence of democracy, however, is letting people vote for the wrong candidates. Democratic society has its risks, but we must gamble on the reasonableness of all our citizens, because it is less dangerous than gambling on the reasonableness of a few. That is why we chose to be a democracy instead of a dictatorship in the first place.

As it is, only 36 to 40 percent of adults who are eligible to vote actually vote in nonpresidential years, and about 25 percent of the population is under 18. As you can see, our representatives are elected by a very small percentage of our citizens. That means that although they are responsible *for* all of us, they are responsible *to* only a few of us. Politicians usually do all they can to keep that few happy, because both voters and politicians are selfish, and a politician's re-election depends on the well-being of the voters. Large segments of society that are not likely or not allowed to vote are either ignored or treated badly because of this system. It would be too much to expect the few always to vote in the interests of the many. Under these circumstances, surely the more people who vote the better, especially if they are of both sexes and of all races, classes and ages.

People also claim that children are irresponsible. Most of

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the teenagers who act irresponsibly do so simply because they are not allowed to solve their problems in any way that would be considered responsible—through the courts or legislature. They fall back on sabotage of the system because they are not allowed to work within it.

Some people believe that children would vote the way their parents tell them to, which would, in effect, give parents more votes. Similarly, when the Nineteenth Amendment was passed in 1920, giving women the vote, many people thought women would vote the way their husbands did. Now women are so independent that the idea of women voting on command seems absurd. The Nineteenth Amendment was a large part of the process that produced their independence. I think a similar and equally desirable result would follow if children were allowed to vote. They are naturally curious, and most are interested in the electoral process and the results of the elections even though they are not allowed to vote. Lacking world-weary cynicism, they see, perhaps even more clearly than their elders, what is going on in their neighborhoods and what is in the news.

Suffragist Belle Case La Follette's comment that if women were allowed to vote there would be a lot more dinner-table discussion of politics is as true of children today. More debate would take place not only in the home but among children and adults everywhere. Adults would also benefit if politics were talked about in libraries, churches, stores, laundromats and other places where children gather.

People may argue that politicians would pander to children if they could vote, promising for instance that free ice cream would be distributed every day. But if kids were duped, they would not be duped for long. Children don't like to be treated condescendingly.

Even now, adults try to manipulate children all the time in glitzy TV ads or, for example, in the supposedly educational pamphlets that nuclear power advocates pass out in school science classes. Political candidates speak at schools, addressing auditoriums full of captive students. In fact, schools should be no more or less political than workplaces. Children are already exposed to many different opinions, and they would likely be exposed to even more if they could vote. The point is that with the vote, they would be better able to fight such manipulation, not only because they would have the power to do so but because they would have added reason to educate themselves on the issues.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY D.B. JOHNSON

What I suggest is that children be allowed to grow into their own right to vote at whatever rate suits them individually. They should not be forced to vote, as adults are not, but neither should they be hindered from voting if they believe themselves capable, as old people are not hindered.

As for the ability to read and write, that should never be used as a criterion for eligibility, since we have already learned from painful past experience that literacy tests can be manipulated to insure discrimination. In any case, very few illiterate adults vote, and probably very few children would want to vote as long as they couldn't read or write. But I firmly believe that, whether they are literate or not, the vast majority of children would not attempt to vote before they are ready. Interest follows hand in hand with readiness, something that is easy to see as a home schooler but that is perhaps not so clear to many people in this society where, ironically, children are continually taught things when they are not ready, and so are not interested. Yet when they are interested, as in the case of voting, they're told they are not yet ready. I think I would not have voted until I was 8 or 9, but perhaps if I had known I could vote I would have taken an interest sooner.

Legally, it would be possible to drop the voting-age requirements. In the Constitution, the states are given all powers to set qualifications for voters except as they defy the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, in which case Congress has the power to enforce it. If it were proved that age requirements "abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States" (which in my opinion they do, since people born in the United States or to U.S. citizens are citizens from the moment they are born), and if the states could not come up with a "compelling interest" argument to justify a limit at a particular age, which Justices Potter Stewart, Warren Burger and Harry Blackmun agreed they could not in *Oregon v. Mitchell* (the Supreme Court case challenging the 1970 amendment to the Voting Rights Act that gave 18-year-olds the vote), then age requirements would be unconstitutional. But it is not necessary that they be unconstitutional for the states to drop them. It is within the power of the states to do that, and I believe that we must start this movement at the state level. According to *Oregon v. Mitchell*, Congress cannot change the qualifications for voting in state elections except by constitutional amendment, which is why the Twenty-sixth Amendment setting the voting age at 18 was necessary. It is very unlikely that an amendment would pass unless several states had tried eliminating the age requirement and had good results. The experience of Georgia and Ken-

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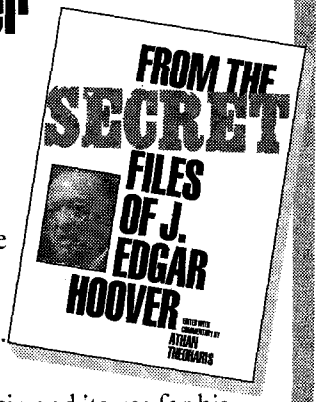

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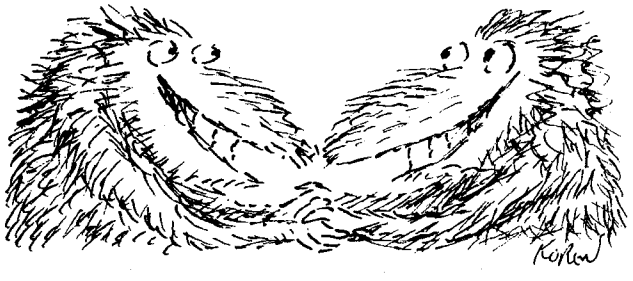

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tucky, which lowered their age limits to 18, helped to pass the Twenty-sixth Amendment in 1971.

Already in our country's history several oppressed groups have been able to convince the unoppressed to free them. Children, who do not have the power to change their situation, must now convince the adults who do to allow them that power. □

LETTER FROM EUROPE

The Dream and The Nightmare

DANIEL SINGER

"How could anyone possibly say that the October Revolution was in vain?" the poet Tvardovsky angrily told Solzhenitsyn in what now seems another age. Today the Soviet rulers dismiss 1917 as the root of all evil. Indeed, toppling statues, renaming streets, rechristening Leningrad Sankt Peterburg, they wish to obliterate seventy-four years of their existence (considering the role played in the *ancien régime* by so many of the new anti-Communist crusaders, this preference for amnesia is understandable).

The abortive putsch precipitated the pace of events but also raised a host of question marks. Can Mikhail Gorbachev recover sufficiently to be more than a figurehead at the center? Is it possible to conceive a confederation of allegedly equal states when one of the members has half the population and nearly two-thirds of the national product? What form will the class struggle take now that Russia in particular is quickening its step on the road to capitalism, and how will the "grand duke" Boris Yeltsin and his fellow "democrats" react when they meet popular resistance? And, on the world scale, how will diplomacy be carried on now that one of the two superpowers, while remaining nuclear, accepts so ostentatiously the suzerainty of the other?

These are the questions for tomorrow. Today is one of those moments of vital change when a writer, it seems, has a duty to his readers. As the new turncoats, the Soviet vicars of Bray, prostrate themselves in front of the golden calf and listen religiously to the officiating priests in International Monetary Fund vestments, as the West's huge propaganda machine seizes this opportunity not just to bury communism, socialism, Marxism et al. but to dismiss any opposition to the rule of capital as a form of mental aberration, he must, at the risk of repetition, overemphasis and oversimplification, state, however briefly, what in his opinion is coming to an end and what is at stake in the ideological offensive.

We are witnessing the ultimate stages of something that began as the heroic search for a historical shortcut. Very rapidly this experiment was turned into a Marxist tragedy, as the revolution failed to spread and the Bolsheviks found them-

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s Europe correspondent.*

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selves with the rugged reality of backward Russia and the need to accomplish within a short spell what Western Europe had achieved, in no gentle fashion, over a couple of centuries. Whether what happened had to happen is a matter for speculation. "Primitive accumulation" of capital did produce Stalinism, with its bloody collectivization, its discipline imposed by the dread of the concentration camp and its Byzantine cult of the ruling demigod. But it also produced a political system that survived the Leader and proved strong enough to resist pressure for the indispensable economic reform, because that reform threatened its hold on power and privilege. Thus, after an abortive attempt by Nikita Khrushchev to alter things, the Soviet Union and its bloc lived through two decades of economic stagnation. By the time Gorbachev picked up spectacularly where Khrushchev had left off, the *perestroika*, or revolution from above, was probably destined to veer in a capitalist direction.

Balance sheets drawn in the moment of bankruptcy are always distorted, the liquidator concentrating on the bottom line rather than the what-went-before, the stirring story of an enterprise, and this is no exception. The tale of the past seven decades cannot be written all in black. It involves illusions and enthusiasms, heroic deeds and genuine sacrifices, mass education, the rise of the downtrodden and the wholesale transformation of society. A similar point-counterpoint is needed for the external version. It is true that Stalin turned big Communist parties with popular roots into obedient puppets, but also true that Russia's pioneering example inspired millions throughout the world to defy their establishment. The tanks that brought the Stalinist regime up to the Elbe were the same tanks that had liberated that part of Europe from the Nazis. Even more recently, while infecting all countries that entered its orbit with bureaucratic inefficiency, the Soviet Union was also the only potential external obstacle to the expansion of American imperialism. Having been all my conscious life a stern critic of Stalin and his heirs, I find it quite easy to say that the pictures of the Soviet era now being drawn, often by former admirers or practitioners, are caricatures.

But it required the blind faith of the Stalinists yesterday and the hypocrisy of our Western propagandists today to describe this strange and sinister formation, product of specific circumstances, as Marxism incarnate and socialism on earth. It is absurd, for instance, to condemn *all* social and economic planning by drawing conclusions from a Soviet mechanism designed to deal with uprooted peasants and expand basic production. It is ridiculous to assert that the marketplace is the only guarantee of freedom (what about Chile? South Africa?), arguing as if the dictatorship over the proletariat practiced in the Soviet Union were a strict application of Marx's idea of cooperation between "freely associated producers." The third and now most fashionable propagandist fallacy, drawn from the Soviet example, is that the roads to equality and inefficiency coincide.

The egalitarianism of Soviet society was a myth. In the vulgarized Marxism the regime professed, equality was something for the very distant communist paradise, not for here and now. Egalitarianism, confused with leveling (*uravnilovka*), was considered a heresy. That is quite understandable, since

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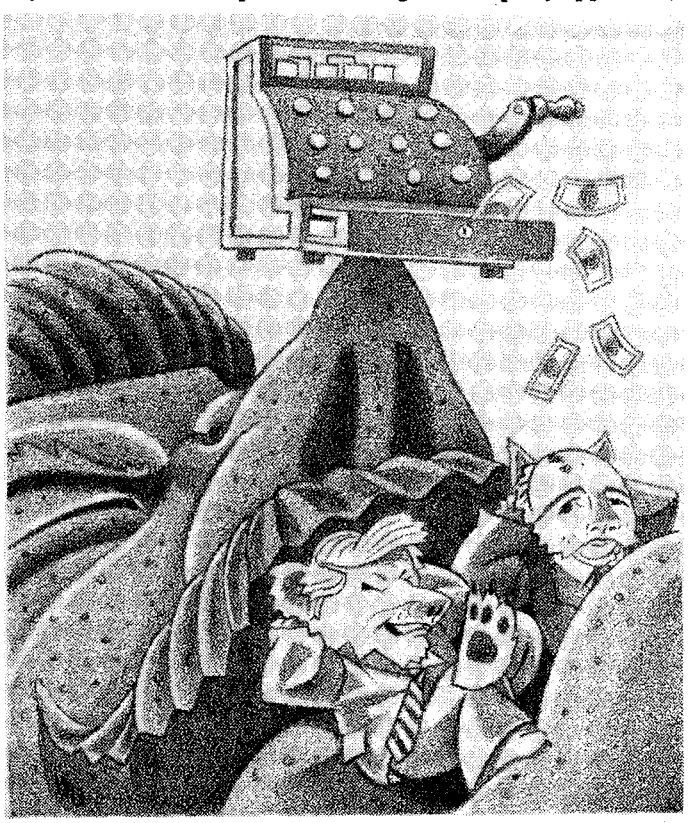
Stalin rose to power at the head of a new elite whose privileges were emphasized by scarcity (compared with no shoes at all, three pairs of shoes are infinity).

What is true is that this elite could not develop cohesion as a class because it was being decimated by periodic purges. The only thing it wished after Stalin's departure was security of tenure. Khrushchev, who assumed wrongly that it wanted reform, was overthrown. Brezhnev, who understood its conservatism, reigned for longer than expected. Appetite, however, grows with eating. By the end of his reign, many of the privileged wanted to insure the permanence of their status and the possibility of transferring it to the next generation. For that they required private property. After the accumulation of joys, the joy of accumulation.

The still-untold story of Gorbachev's daring and solitude will have to be seen in this context. By 1985 all sections of the Soviet establishment were resigned to the fact that the system would have to be altered because of the deepening economic crisis. They also wanted to preserve their power and privileges. They therefore chose a reformer in their midst to perform the miracle. Gorbachev showed real vision when he assumed that economic reform would be impossible without radical political transformation. The period of *glasnost*—the introduction of freedoms that are no less precious because they were inaugurated by the bourgeois revolution—was exhilarating. More, however, was required if the Soviet Union was to move in a socialist direction: new forms of democracy in the workplace and the country at large, a reliance on the inventiveness of a mass movement from below. Gorbachev briefly tried to woo the workers, then gave up the attempt. Deserted by the *priviligentsia,* who thought that he, unlike Yeltsin, was moving too slowly toward capitalism, he found himself alone, having to rely on the traditional pillars of the regime: the party apparatus,



the army and the K.G.B., which were the three instigators of the coming putsch. Yet he was clearly not their ally. With the economy crumbling as a result of the interregnum, during which old economic ties were broken and no new ones were built to take their place, Gorbachev finally opted for the I.M.F.-sponsored capitalist solution. After the London Group of Seven meeting there could be no doubt about it. Thus the futile putsch and its consequences did not really alter the direction in which the Soviet Union was moving. But it vitally changed the pace of the race and the person in the driver's seat.

In their trial of strength last March, it was actually Yeltsin, not Gorbachev, who used the workers as a means of pressure. On reflection, that is not really surprising. To the workers Gorbachev represents the Communist Party, which is the exploiter they know. Yeltsin, cleverly parading as their supporter, represents the unknown private employer of tomorrow. However, Soviet society has been reshaped in seventy years. It now has a huge army of labor, better educated and less frightened than the uprooted *muzhiks* thrown into industry in the prewar period. Clearly, as the miners' strike of 1989 shows, the workers are already able to defend some of their immediate interests. One day, together with sections of the intelligentsia, they may be able to impose their interests as the superior interests of society. Or, to put it in the unfashionable language of young Marx, the working class is already a class-in-itself and could become a class-for-itself. In March it helped Yeltsin in his rise to power. In a future confrontation it could bring about his downfall.

For the time being, a triumphant Yeltsin enjoys the limelight. Taking part, with Gorbachev, in the *ABC Town Meeting* in early September, he told a Los Angeles viewer that Communism was "a utopian idea, though a beautiful one," and a tragedy for Russia. To prove that it was a utopia, he added, "it would have been better to conduct this experiment in a smaller country," thus revealing the narrowness of his Stalinist upbringing. If socialism was doomed in a large backward state, the experiment would have been even more disastrous in a small backward state. On the other hand, if the revolution had spread to the advanced countries—to Germany, France and England, say—history would have taken quite a different course, something neither Yeltsin nor his TV sponsors care to admit.

Besides, utopias are not Yeltsin's cup of tea. He clearly is not the dreamy type. Sixty years old, he belongs to the generation of pragmatists who entered politics before Stalin's death and climbed thereafter. To rise so high, to become party boss or, if you prefer, viceroy of the industrially important area of Sverdlovsk, he had to show the qualities of a top apparatchik—ruthlessness with subordinates and sycophancy with the leader. It will be objected that at the time there was no other way to the top. But Yeltsin has since shown that he will not let his career be handicapped by principles. When Gorbachev brought him to Moscow in 1985, Yeltsin, sensing the popular mood, gained fame by expressing the plebeian resentment against privilege. Now, surrounded by economic advisers from the Hoover Institution, he proudly proclaims that today in Russia the sky is the limit to what a person can earn. What will he be saying tomorrow?

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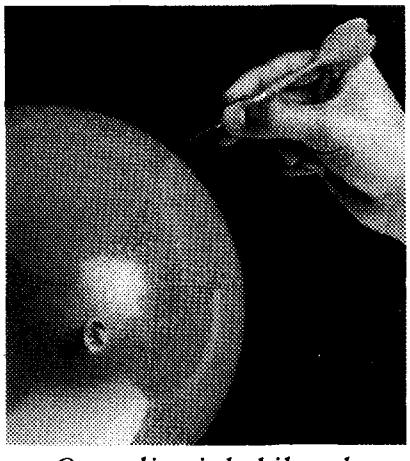

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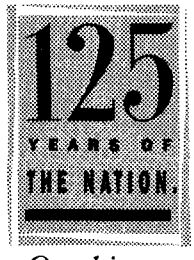

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And yet, in a way, by drawing attention to the clash between the dream and the reality, Yeltsin brought us close to the heart of the matter. The days of believers are over. The shock in the outside world over the August upheaval was connected with the sudden end of an era and not with the feeling of paradise lost, as experienced by the faithful after Khrushchev's indictment of Stalin in 1956. For years now throughout Eastern Europe the gap between promise and fulfillment has been too wide to be covered with words. Nobody could believe that the workers were masters of their factories, that democracy was really popular or that the state was withering away, not even the officials who had to pay lip service to those myths. This gap between the beautiful dream and the ugly reality explains the people's divorce from and contempt for politics. Together with economic stagnation, and therefore the end of social advancement on a mass scale, it is one of the reasons all these regimes, including the Soviet, have collapsed with such unexpected ease. It is also the cause of the discredit of socialism, with whatever face, throughout Eastern Europe.

How deep and lasting is this undoubted rejection? A few signs are pointing in the opposite direction. Opinion polls, private conversations and complaints by priests of the new capitalist religion seem to suggest that the citizens of these countries, and particularly of the Soviet Union, find the right to work natural, unemployment absurd and the fact that a person can earn, say, a hundred times as much as another immoral. There is a sneaking suspicion that the principles preached but trampled upon rather than practiced may have somehow penetrated the popular unconscious. If so, they could come to the surface as the population, understandably dazzled by the West's conspicuous consumption, gradually discovers, beyond the TV image and the preachings of new priests, the true nature of capitalism, especially the crude, primitive version destined for Eastern Europe. The question is important, because on the answer depends whether the outbursts and explosions that are bound to come will take a progressive or a semifascist form.

In the best of cases, a socialist resurrection will take time. Meanwhile, it is up to the Western left to carry on the battle. Having dropped the Soviet model some time ago, it must provide its own answers to contradictions crippling its own societies. But it also has a more immediate international task: It must counter the huge campaign designed to convince everybody that it is suicidal to seek a radical alternative to a capitalism that now covers the planet, a campaign launched during the 1989 upheaval in Eastern Europe and reaching its inevitable climax. That campaign is based on a disjointed syllogism: The dream is a nightmare, the nightmare is socialism and, therefore, there can be no exit from capitalist society. Stripped of the slogans about freedom and the market, the argument is based on the humiliating premises that human beings can be guided only by greed or fear and that individuals are incapable of collective action designed to create a just society. The current treatment of the Soviet experience is taken completely out of historical context. The proposition that people cannot change the system through collective action is belied by the very events of Eastern Europe.

But all this matters little. What makes this propaganda campaign powerful is its dimension, not its rationality. Reverberated by the media, it is orchestrated on a world scale, with a contingent of Soviet turncoats now joining the Eastern European chorus. Western intellectuals who are not servants of the establishment must seize every available opportunity to reveal the falsity and distortions of this propagandist score. In the process, they may soon discover new allies beyond the Elbe and, who knows, prove together that there, too, the story is not finished—that 1917, whatever the horrors that followed, was part of humankind's unfinished, uncertain and often tragic struggle for mastery over its own fate. □

RACISM REVISITED

George Bush Is Whistling 'Dixie'

FRED POWLEDGE

The President of the United States is a racist. That became clear to me a few years ago, about the time George Bush was waging his first campaign for President. I was writing a book about the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and I was interviewing movement veterans—black and white, pro and con, hero and villain—and I found myself one summer day in the cool, shady office of John Patterson of Montgomery, Alabama.

Now it's *Judge* Patterson, of the State Court of Criminal Appeals. Back in the 1950s it was Alabama Attorney General Patterson, and in 1958, after he defeated a young lawyer named George Wallace, it was Governor Patterson. Earlier, as Attorney General, Patterson had helped plan the white South's defense against the school desegregation that had been ordered by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and then as Governor he maintained segregation in the face of federal court action, Freedom Riders and most everything else until he was, as the saying went, out-niggered by Wallace in another campaign. Patterson was known as a very mean man on racial matters; so mean that he told Negro schools they could not send their marching bands to his inaugural parade.

Now he was telling me, with a gentle smile on his face, that it was all playacting: "We knew we were going to lose," he said. His entire strategy was aimed merely at eating up time, "delaying the ultimate day." Patterson bore no hard feelings against blacks, he said. It was just that he wanted to keep his job. "I didn't particularly want to be a martyr for anybody's cause. I wanted to survive politically, and I wanted to run again. And in order to do so, I had to do what I thought the majority of the voters of Alabama expected me to do."

So it was a form of deadly theater he played? "No question about it." And the poor white voters, the people for

Fred Powledge's fourteenth book is Free at Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It *(Little, Brown).*

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whom his positions were tailored (there being precious few black voters in Alabama at the time)—they never knew it was theater, did they?

"No. They thought that we were standing up for them, to the bitter end." It was, Patterson said, all based on "the desire to survive politically." *His* desire to survive politically.

Politicians back then were easily classified as either racists by conviction—Lester Maddox of Georgia, Mississippi's Ross Barnett, Birmingham's Bull Connor come instantly to mind—or racists by convenience. John Patterson, along with the great majority of Southern political figures (and not a few from the North, too), belonged in the latter category. In fact, there were relatively few elected politicians in the South who were really hard-core, white-supremacist racists. The rest only spoke the language of racism—preferred to hint at, rather than declare emphatically, the inferiority of black people, their insatiable sexual lust and the dangers of letting them accumulate power through equal employment or equal education or, God forbid, equal access to the voting booth. This language was easily understood by the white electorate, both those members who thought of themselves as "moderate" but who were easily talked into fear-induced racism, and those who were the active cross-burners and bomb-setters.

Of the two, political racism is the worse, I think. At least the iron-collar racists had the strength of their bigotry and commanded a modicum of *respect*—if it could be called that—from the members of the movement they were continuously trying to terrorize. Nobody respected the others, those who used race without conviction. It was as if piling deception on top of racism was beyond even the never-all-that-far-off pale of Southern racism.

And so when George Bush started talking about Willie Horton, there was only one conclusion that could be drawn: This boy was playing with racism in the fine old Southern white politician tradition. And the same rules ought to apply. If it was racism then, it's racism now.

What kicked it off so spectacularly, of course, was the Willie Horton ads. Bush's advertising designers (with campaign manager Lee Atwater, a youthful but experienced veteran of South Carolina racial politics) used the specter of a wild-looking black man who had assaulted a Maryland couple while on furlough from a Massachusetts prison to make the unspoken point so crudely made on so many other occasions by so many Southern politicians: If you white people vote for George Bush's opponent, this man is going to marry your daughter, or worse. But the Horton campaign was not just a wildcat operation for Bush, an aberration in an otherwise dignified career. In 1964 he opposed the Civil Rights Act as legislation that "violates the constitutional rights of all people."

More recently, Bush has used a counterfeit issue, alleged employment quotas that favor members of minority groups, to veto the Civil Rights Act of 1990. He is doing the same thing this year. Ray Jenkins, who is the editorial-page editor of the Baltimore *Evening Sun* (and who covered civil rights for an Alabama newspaper), has noted that Bush took words right out of George Wallace's mouth when he told a business group this past June that supporters of the civil rights legislation were courting "different blocs of voters." (In the 1960s, a politician who wished to avoid using the word "nigger" but who wanted to get the same thought across used the code term "bloc vote.")

Bush has failed to rid federal agencies of discrimination, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which back then was an active agent of segregation. When it appeared that a group of business and civil rights leaders was about to arrive privately at a workable consensus on affirmative action, Bush sent over his ace hatchet man, John Sununu, to intimidate the business leaders and torpedo the compromise. It was de rigueur in the racist South for state government to intimidate those few whites who might be foolish or courageous enough to speak out for integration or, in some places, even moderation. Some states passed laws warning attorneys that handling civil rights cases might be judged "unprofessional conduct." Louisiana enacted a law in 1956 that mandated the firing of any schoolteacher who was charged with belonging to an organization that advocated "bringing about integration of the races" in any school. The white leadership was always fearful of letting the citizenry work out its own race-relations problems—and it is now.

It is likely that, unless he has a sudden change of heart or fortune, Bush will turn up the racist heat as his 1992 re-election campaign progresses—or regresses. In August he went before a group of police officers and promised to bring "order to streets decimated by lawlessness and chaos." He was working the Willie Horton routine again, and for those who couldn't figure that out, he mentioned prisoner furloughs. Bush failed to address the vexing question of how the streets had got so "decimated" during his time in office.

Bush's nomination to the Supreme Court of Clarence Thomas, an unqualified black man with some strange ideas

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about law, is another shameless act. Bush is using his sponsorship of a person of color to counter criticism of his vetoes of civil rights legislation. The icing on the cake is the fact that conservatives, no matter how much they may quake at the notion of *any* black male in *any* position of power off the football field, will love Thomas's apparent positions (they seem to vary a great deal) on economic and personal-liberties issues. Bush can hardly lose. In the very old days, the plantation owners displayed their house slaves as evidence that they really liked colored people, despite the way they treated their field workers. In the not-so-old days, people like George Wallace and Herman Talmadge would boast about their great love for black people, by whom they meant the ancient, white-jacketed retainers who brought them ice water in their governors' mansions and maintained on their faces, at least during their working hours, masks that betrayed no thought, no emotion. They needed the work, and it was better than picking cotton.

What Bush is doing is a slightly more sophisticated version of what North Carolina's racial politician Jesse Helms does: seeking out ignorant and apprehensive voters (easy in this day of instant polling analysis), mining their fears and turning those voters into partisans. In the process, Bush is trying to sell a major deceit. His rhetoric includes the assertion that since we've got laws on the books *declaring* the races to be equal, they are therefore *treated* equally. Since the "playing field," to employ one of the year's more overused political clichés, is level, there is no more need (if there ever was one) to remedy the problems of race relations that may or may not have afflicted this country at some moment in the distant past. No need to push for de facto, as well as de jure, equality in the areas the movement of the 1960s fought so hard over: employment, education, housing, justice.

The problem, of course, is that the playing field is not level and never has been. A glance at the statistics that pour out every day, from infant mortality to housing discrimination, shows that. Two of the numbers tell so much: The mortality rate for black infants is twice that of white babies, and whites born in 1989 can expect to live six years longer than blacks born that year. For evidence of a nonstatistical nature, there's the serendipitous videotaping of the Los Angeles Police Department in action.

Bush, like the Southern governors and other racists of the fifties and sixties, seems absolutely without moral conviction on the subject of race relations. He appears to have no understanding whatever that when a politician starts using racial symbolism and language, there is a line of common decency that should not be crossed; that there can be *shame* involved in acting this way. The existence of this line was important back in the sixties; it separated from the racist rabble those white people who, for reasons of upbringing or conscience or good sense, would not participate in overt racism. Reporters called them "decent whites."

Nobody seems interested in trying to make Bush feel guilty about what he's doing.

Bush's most shameful contribution to the race-relations mess closely parallels that made by the Southern governor-racists of the fifties and sixties. By acting as he does, he is giving license to other racists—the hard-core kind, including those who like to play with bombs—to revel publicly in their bigotry. The Wallaces and Pattersons used to speechify about how the good people of Alabama believed in law and order, and so forth and so on, but their simultaneous promises of defiance (which they never intended to keep) mobilized the cross-burners and bomb-throwers and indirectly caused death, violence, mayhem and a denial of equal rights to a peaceful group of Americans for well-nigh a generation.

With Bush making the same speeches (but with slightly more sophisticated language) and sending the same signals, is it any wonder that hate-based incidents are clearly on the increase? Lunatics who used to mumble only to themselves now dominate some call-in radio shows, and a retired chiropractor reaches 190,000 Florida households with a cable TV show that starts off with German marching music and deteriorates from there. George Bush has made it O.K. to be a white supremacist, and if he keeps going, he'll make it fashionable as well.

What can we do about this sorry situation? First of all, we can call it by its proper name. It is racism. As the Southern politicians used to say when they were trying to convince their uninformed electorates that anybody who spoke out for "equality" must be a card-carrying Communist (while all the while knowing better), "If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, it must be a duck." Except for a few isolated examples, we don't have the luxury of a clear-cut, slobbering, redneck racism nowadays. The Bull Connors are either dead or smart enough to keep their mouths closed. We have to learn to understand that subtle racism is just as dangerous as unsubtle racism.

We should also recognize the fact that this sort of racism is a clever way of avoiding doing something about poverty, which is at the root of much discrimination and many of the issues we insist on identifying as "racial." Just as Bush and

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his predecessor evaded their responsibilities in scandals in banking, savings and loans, housing, munitions profiteering and a dozen other scams that are now starting to cost us hundreds of billions of dollars, doing nothing about poverty and racial discrimination is going to exact a tremendous price in the future.

Those of us who would like to do something about all this face some formidable obstacles, not the least of which is that there's plenty of evidence that white America in general *is* racist, *does* despise black people (either as individuals or as a group) and *does* prefer to go on believing the absurd fiction that it is possible for whites and blacks to live both side by side and apart in this country, each in their own society.

And there's the malaise thing. It's as if the entire population of decent whites who might be attacking this issue has followed the example of the Democratic Party and simply given up. People speak matter-of-factly about "the lack of national leadership," as if it were beyond fixing. Nobody seems interested in trying to make Bush feel guilty about what he's doing. That's why Senator Bill Bradley's speech this summer criticizing Bush's racial policies, which might have seemed unremarkable three decades ago, made some waves. Here was a politician who actually got up on his hind legs and told everybody about what the emperor was wearing and the mud he was slinging. The effectiveness of the speech was evident in the fact that Bush replied to it within twenty-four hours.

The present generation of "decent whites," in league with decent people of all other colors, must make George Bush ashamed of being a political racist and let him know that, as he so often said when he was demonizing Saddam Hussein, we will hold him "personally responsible" for his actions. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, an independent body and therefore not subject to the same sort of cheap political manipulation as Bush's Justice Department, took a step in this direction in July when it unanimously urged Bush and leaders in the House and Senate to "act decisively" to "prevent the use of irresponsible campaign tactics that only serve to divide the nation along racial lines."

We can try to short-circuit Bush's plans to use racism in the 1992 campaign by letting him know we're watching. What would happen if newspaper editors got fed up with racial politics and started identifying it when it happens? A good number of them became incensed at the slimy political attack ads that proliferated during the last campaign. Some vowed to do a better job of interpreting what the political managers and ad-writers inflict on the public. Why not with the politics of race, too?

We should try to appeal to Bush's vanity (anybody who drives a Cigarette muscle boat has vanity problems). Remind him that history will not remember George Wallace and John Patterson for the misty mellowness that settled on them in their later years (and, by great coincidence, after black people got the vote in Alabama) but for their acts of disgraceful defiance at the schoolhouse door and at the bus terminals in Anniston and Birmingham and Montgomery when the Freedom Riders came through. What, in the field of race relations, will we have to remember George Bush by? Willie Horton and the years of hatred and divisiveness that followed? □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Common Faith

JAMES MILLER

JOHN DEWEY AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY. *By Robert B. Westbrook. Cornell. 608 pp. $29.95.*

Mention John Dewey and most people think of his views about education, his ideas about pragmatism, his metaphysics of experience—almost anything, in fact, but his political philosophy. It is an odd oversight, for Dewey is in many ways America's uncrowned philosopher-king. More trenchantly than any other thinker in the twentieth century, he defined and popularized a civic religion of democracy. And though his work is rarely read anymore, the general style of his thought remains deeply influential. Ask almost any thoughtfully liberal undergraduate what he or she believes about truth and justice, and you are liable to get in response a more or less coherent rehearsal of Deweyan convictions (even if these are sometimes expressed in misleadingly Derridean accents). Although they deny the existence of either immutable concepts or transcendent moral precepts, most of the students I have known are imbued with a can-do confidence in the merits of social reform, animated by a serene faith in the value of a strong form of democracy, ideally anti-elitist and nonhierarchical.

Throughout his long life, Dewey defended something like this nexus of beliefs, struggling to make such convictions coherent. Knowledge, he argued, was an evolving product, the result of active experimentation in constantly changing historical circumstances. Freedom of thought alone might, in time, produce warranted assertions, binding society together in a life of shared insight and uncoerced consensus. Rejecting authoritarian approaches to education, Dewey tried to instill flexible habits and a sturdy sense of self-confidence, thus expanding the scope of effective freedom. Applying similar principles to making his own political commitments, he lent his support to the dissenting liberal organizations of his day, from the American Civil Liberties Union to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In the pages of the *New Republic* and other progressive publications, he tirelessly expounded his faith in the value of unfettered inquiry and the institutions of democracy, with lasting effect. Even today, nearly forty years after his death in 1952, his impact is evident in the work of such currently fashionable figures as the American philosopher Richard Rorty and the German critical theorist Jürgen Habermas, whose regulative ideal of undistorted communication owes a large debt to Dewey and his pragmatic forebears. The Columbia University philosopher Charles Frankel was exaggerating only slightly, I think, when he remarked that "to know where we stand toward Dewey's ideas is to find out, at least in part, where we stand with ourselves."

'Among liberal intellectuals of the twentieth century, Dewey was the most important advocate of participatory democracy.'

Frankel's comment serves as the epigraph for Robert B. Westbrook's new book on Dewey. Neither a straight biography nor a narrow work of scholarship, *John Dewey and American Democracy* offers instead a briskly readable narrative of Dewey's lifework, focusing on his advocacy of democracy. Westbrook quite plausibly stresses the unity of Dewey's life and work, demonstrating that many of his apparently abstract texts—on aesthetics, on logic, on metaphysics—have a more or less direct bearing on his moral vision and his political actions. By approaching Dewey from this angle, Westbrook wants to show that he was a more radical figure than many people suppose. "Among liberal intellectuals of the twentieth century, Dewey was the most important advocate of participatory democracy," he writes in his preface, explaining his book's central claim: "This ideal rested on a 'faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished,' a faith, Dewey argued, 'so deeply embedded in the methods which are intrinsic to democracy that when a professed democrat denies the faith he convicts himself of treachery to his profession.' " Dewey kept the faith; and for this reason alone, suggests Westbrook, his lifework remains a model of thoughtful social criticism.

Is Westbrook right? Given the parlous state of liberal and social democratic politics in America today, this is not an entirely academic question.

John Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, in 1859, on the eve of the Civil War. The third son of Archibald and Lucina Dewey, he grew up in modest circumstances. His father owned a grocery store. His mother was a crusading local philanthropist, noted for her work among Burlington's poor; a fiercely puritanical Congregationalist, she preached an ethic of strenuous self-improvement. Neighbors would later recall that she was checking constantly to see if John and the other boys were "right with Jesus."

As a student at the University of Vermont, Dewey immersed himself in the great questions of theology, studying metaphysics and becoming a kind of neo-Kantian. A pious young man, he took religion very seriously, undergoing a mystical conversion experience when he was in his early 20s. Like a number of other religiously minded thinkers in the late nineteenth century, he became concerned to reconcile the spiritual teachings of Christianity with the discoveries of modern science, above all Darwin's new biology.

He wrote his first philosophical papers in the 1880s under the influence of Hegel's theory of history. In these papers, Dewey argued that the evolution of life on earth revealed itself to be a kind of natural theodicy, through which God progressively became embodied, and achieved self-consciousness, in the souls of enlightened human beings conjoined in a good society. In effect, Dewey in those years became America's most eminent left-Hegelian, an accomplishment that merits comparison with Karl Marx's similar achievement in Germany forty years earlier.

James Miller, the author of "Democracy Is in the Streets" *(Simon and Schuster), is finishing a biographical study of Michel Foucault, which Summit will publish next year.*

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Like Marx, Dewey began by naturalizing Hegel's philosophy, translating the mystery of Absolute Spirit into strictly empirical (or "materialist") terms. Like Marx, too, Dewey in time came to regard religion as "the heart of a heartless world," a man-made web of consoling beliefs that would doubtless disappear once the essence of religion—for both men, a community bound together by universal enlightenment and love—was realized in history.

Temperamentally, however, the two men could scarcely have been more different. Marx was a fighter. Dewey, on the other hand, was a temporizer, ever ready to compromise and conciliate. The harmonious community Marx hoped to realize through class conflict, Dewey felt would emerge through the unfettered communication of reasoned knowledge. While Marx thus pinned his faith on a transitional dictatorship of the proletariat, Dewey dreamed of capturing "the machinery of education" in order to foster the power of knowledge and the arts of communication essential to a vibrant democracy.

By "democracy" Dewey did not mean simply a type of representative government. He rather meant to evoke a kind of church writ large, a communion of souls sharing the same faith in freedom and equality, a form of society in which individuals with their distinct talents and callings would be educated, empowered and treated with respect. Democracy for him was thus "a form of moral and spiritual association," a society, so he wrote, in which "the divine and the human organization of society are one."

Dewey was not the first New England puritan to embrace a democratic utopia. His forerunners include the Congregationalist theologian John Wise (1652–1725), arguably America's first great democratic theorist. And Dewey's political vision dovetails with perhaps the most famous democratic byproduct of Congregationalist practices, the New England town meeting.

What made Dewey unique was not his regard for democracy as a spiritual ideal but rather his startling proclamation that this ideal was a natural product of human evolution. Rarely has a modern philosopher been so explicit about the religious motives behind an ostensibly scientific theory. "The next religious prophet who will have a permanent and real influence on men's lives," declared Dewey with disarming candor in 1892, "will be the man who succeeds in pointing out the reli-

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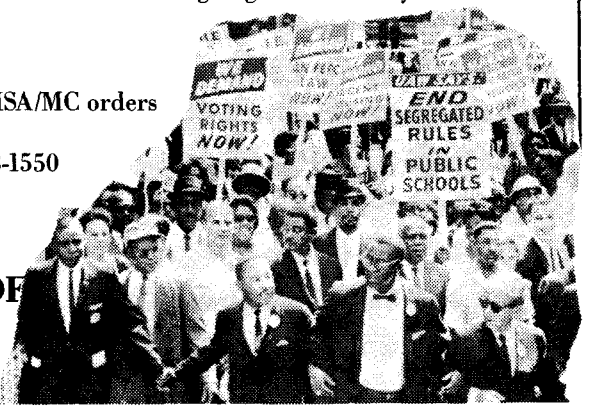

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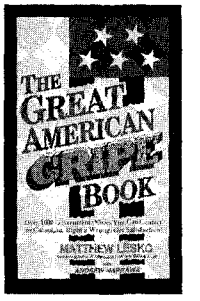

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gious meaning of democracy." For Dewey, the "method of intelligence," freely applied, promised a kind of this-worldly liberation—the Kingdom of God, made real by the scientific resolution of human problems. (It is an irony of history that religious fundamentalists have lately been able to cite Dewey in legal briefs in support of their contention that so-called "secular humanism" is a religion in its own right. As even this short account of Dewey's views may suggest, they have a point.)

Dewey remained an observant Congregationalist until 1894. But his arrival at the University of Chicago that summer coincided with his departure from the church, never to return. Like such friends and newfound allies as Jane Addams, he now began to preach a "social gospel," trying to save souls by changing the institutions of society—and, above all, the institutions of education. Besides supporting the settlement work of Addams at Chicago's Hull House, Dewey created an experimental elementary school at the university where he could test his pedagogical theories. "Education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform," he wrote in 1898—and the teacher, not the minister, would usher in "the true kingdom of God."

Not for the last time, Dewey's lofty hopes fell short in practice. In 1905, he left Chicago under acrimonious circumstances, accused of nepotism and academic empire-building after he appointed his wife principal of the lab school. Moving to Columbia, he would spend the rest of his years at the center of American intellectual life in New York City, writing dozens of scholarly articles and producing the large works for which he is most famous: *Democracy and Education* (1916), *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), *Experience and Nature* (1929) and *The Quest for Certainty* (1929).

Westbrook does a good job of guiding the reader through Dewey's voluminous writings—indeed, much of his book consists of crisp exegesis. This is no mean feat. Dewey, a philosophical Methuselah, lived to be 92 years old. Throughout most of his long life, he wrote prolifically—and, all too often, badly. Even so, Westbrook's reconstruction of his evolving thought is detailed, sympathetic and lucid.

Westbrook also does a useful job of recounting the key political episodes in Dewey's later life. After leaving Chicago, Dewey kept a relatively low profile until World War I, when he spoke out in support of both the war and Woodrow Wilson. In the years that followed, he was rarely out of the political limelight, emerging as a quixotic kind of social democrat. He played an active role in the League for Industrial Democracy, a postwar successor to the Student Socialist Union. He supported the Progressive Party and Robert La Follette in the presidential campaign of 1924, and cast several subsequent votes for Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party's perennial presidential candidate. A left-wing anti-Communist, he became friendly with the maverick American Marxist Sidney Hook, perhaps the most gifted of his disciples. And in 1937, he came to know Leon Trotsky in the course of conducting an independent public inquiry that cleared the exiled Bolshevik of the charges of treason and murder laid against him by Stalin.

In these later years, two episodes cast an especially revealing light on the character and quality of Dewey's democratic convictions. The first is his troubled relationship with the progressive intellectual Randolph Bourne; the second is his debate with Walter Lippmann over the practicality of his political ideals. Both Bourne and Lippmann had come of age in a cultural atmosphere defined, in part, by Dewey's work: Born in the 1880s, both men played a key role in launching the *New Republic* in 1914 and imbuing its early issues with a Deweyan ethos.

Bourne, a fervent admirer of Dewey's work, had a keen understanding of its evangelical form: "His philosophy is a great sermon," wrote Bourne in 1915, "challenging in every line, in spite of his discreet style, our mechanical habits of thought, our mechanical habits of education, our mechanical morality." Hailing this "prophet dressed in the clothes of a professor of logic," Bourne praised Dewey for grasping "the implications of democracy more clearly than anybody else."

Watching Dewey throw his support to Wilson after America's entry into World War I, Bourne felt compelled to revise drastically this glowing estimate. Dewey's behavior was in fact pusillanimous, strongly endorsing the President one week, meekly criticizing him the next. Instead of inspiring a critique of petrified institutions, Dewey's idea of democracy in this context functioned as a vague and "unanalyzed term," useful "as a call to battle" but worthless, Bourne charged, as an "intellectual tool."

If Dewey was stung by Bourne's critique, he never admitted it publicly. In-

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stead, he worked quietly behind the scenes, doing what he could to destroy Bourne's career. In this he largely succeeded, helping to get Bourne fired from his job at *The Dial*. It is a disgraceful episode—and one that throws into doubt Dewey's much-vaunted reputation as a self-effacing saint.

But the episode is revealing for another reason as well. Bourne's critique was prompted, after all, not by any change in Dewey's philosophy—there was none—but rather by the changed circumstances of its application. Woodrow Wilson famously reassured his compatriots that America had entered the Great War in order to "make the world safe for democracy." The conjunction of this faintly evangelical promise with the prospect of an invigorating moral crusade had a real power to whip up blindly patriotic passions, as Wilson demonstrated—and as Dewey himself unwittingly confirmed by his own zealous response to Wilson's rhetoric.

Incidents like this amply demonstrated the pliability of public opinion, and the susceptibility to propaganda of even informed readers. The experience was a sobering one for many avowed democrats. It led Lippmann, for one, to modify and eventually abandon his original hopes for democratic reform. In his important essay on *Public Opinion*, first published in 1922, Lippmann argued that most people, no matter how well educated, were open to manipulation; "a public which directs the course of events" was a practical impossibility; the ideal of democracy was therefore a "mystical fallacy."

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey strenuously disagreed. While he conceded the empirical accuracy of Lippmann's account of modern-day public opinion, he reaffirmed his belief that direct participation in a democracy would foster an unexpected talent for thoughtful deliberation in ordinary men and women. "We lie," Dewey insisted, "in the lap of an immense intelligence." The trick was to unleash this intelligence, which remained "dormant" until "it possesses the local community as its medium." Whether such a truly participatory democracy, built around face-to-face interactions in "neighborly communities," was a real possibility, however, Dewey characteristically refused to say. He would make no effort, he wrote, "to state how the required conditions might come into existence, nor to prophesy that they will occur."

At the same time, Dewey dropped portentous hints that the kind of community he sought would surely result from the wise application to social life of his own "method of intelligence." His vision of democracy, he wrote in the 1930s, offered a "clear and intense conception of a union of ideal ends with actual conditions," indicating "something to be done." His social goal, he reiterated in 1939, was "not located in the clouds" but rather was "backed by something deep and indestructible in the needs and demands of humankind," something that all *"men agree to call ideal."*

The phrase I have italicized is typical of Dewey's ambiguity at crucial moments. Does he really mean to say that all men and women, as a matter of empirical fact, share the same view of what is ideal? If so, he is demonstrably mistaken. Or does Dewey mean to say only that all men and women *ought* to (or will someday in practice come to) regard certain things—for example, participatory democracy—as ideal? If so, why? Although the passage begs for a historical, or logical, explanation, the reader is left to mull over an empty assertion.

Dewey's work is full of such airy rhetoric. Perhaps that is because Dewey, "scientific" protestations to the contrary, never ceased to write out of an essentially religious conviction. One thing is clear: Like Marx, he expressed an absolutely unwavering faith in what the future would bring.

"Democracy is still untried," Dewey wrote in 1893—and, in a sense, even today, a hundred years later, "democracy" as Dewey understood it is "still untried." As Westbrook notes, "Whereas Dewey urged maximum participation by a responsible public in the direction of human affairs, other liberals have sought to maximize the responsibility of powerful elites while at the same time insulating these elites from most of the pressures of the benighted 'masses.' " The neighborly communities that Dewey hoped would kindle the intelligence dormant in every soul are few and far between in contemporary America.

Has Dewey's political philosophy been discredited by history, then? Or is his vision of democracy rather to be cherished and somehow rescued from oblivion? It is hard to know how to respond to such questions. Dewey's political thought, like his philosophy generally, is disappointingly soft at its center. Too many crucial claims unravel under close scrutiny; too many difficult choices are evaded. As liberals and social democrats have learned

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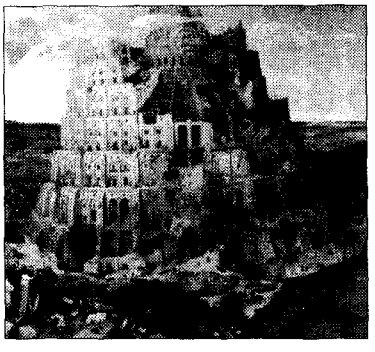

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the hard way, free inquiry cannot, by itself, produce a community united by shared insight; even with the wisest of teachers, schools cannot, by themselves, solve the problems of society; the methods of modern science are no guarantee of freedom and equality, and neither is pious rhetoric. To rest content with evangelical sermons on the virtues of participatory democracy—as Robert Bellah and his colleagues do in their new Deweyan tract, *The Good Society*—is to insure the continuing intellectual and political ineffectiveness of the American left.

At the same time, Dewey's own historical achievement is undeniable. For better or worse, he has bequeathed to more than one generation of Americans, both directly and indirectly, an amazingly resilient outlook on life, a credo combining a tolerant brand of relativism with a high-minded call for social justice and a sturdy conviction that democracy is worth struggling for. In these days of global democratic revolt, it is indeed Dewey, and not Marx, who appears as the most prescient of Hegel's heirs.

It is this achievement that Westbrook's book documents and lays open to fresh scrutiny. As he concedes in his conclusion, "It would be a mistake (and most un-Deweyan) to recommend an uncritical or wholesale recovery of Dewey's philosophy." The fragile and deeply problematic religious underpinnings of Dewey's democratic faith merit a closer look. Still, Westbrook is surely right to suggest that Americans on the left, searching for a place to begin re-examining their own deepest assumptions, "could do worse"—much worse—"than to look to John Dewey." □

No Place Like Home

JANE HOLTZ KAY

EDGE CITY: Life on the New Frontier. *By Joel Garreau. Doubleday. 546 pp. $22.*

MAKING A MIDDLE LANDSCAPE. *By Peter G. Rowe. M.I.T. 325 pp. $39.95.*

FAR FROM HOME: Life and Loss in Two American Towns. *By Ron Powers. Random House. 317 pp. $22.95.*

Welcome to Edge City, formerly known as supermall. Welcome to that shrink-wrapped new frontier where the deer and the antelope play; where a waterfall ("active water feature") tumbles; and where the city is shed for the safety of homogeneity, the solicitude of air-sealed child care and the pleasures of what used to be called urban life ("amenities").

If you don't recognize this exaltation of virtues, you may visit the likes of Tysons Corner (Virginia), Las Colinas (Texas), Irvine (California) and their kin for testimony. You can find their collections of towers wrapped with parking lots and filled with potted plants, Benetton outlets and I.B.M. offices hard by the interstate. Or, for more detailed information, you may read Joel Garreau's chirpy book on *Edge City*.

Jane Holtz Kay writes about architecture for The Nation. *She is currently at work on a book about the end of the driving age.*

The *Washington Post* writer (who is also the author of *The Nine Nations of North America*) partly describes, partly invents this mega-architectural genre by patching a list of "gallerias" with mall and office tower at the crossroads of our exurban highways on a specific formula: "Five million square feet of leasable office space or more. Six hundred thousand square feet of retail space or more. A population that increases at 9 a.m. on workdays. . . . A local perception as a single end destination for mixed use—jobs, shopping, and entertainment." And, oh yes, "a history in which, thirty years ago, the site was by no means urban; it was overwhelmingly residential or rural in character."

With profiles of single-minded builders, examples of the transformation of pasture and wetland to a landscape whose major crop is "serenity" ("an article hard to come by in Megalopolis," says Jean Gottman, quoted by Garreau), this author toots a new present and future. The cities' "archetypal structure" is the Pentagon, with 23,000 employees and four ZIP codes. Their life style is a Godiva-chocolated thirtysomething idyll.

Safe to say, that is not everybody's favorite sweetener, and Garreau's developer-driven description is often so bottom line as to be offensive (and sometimes so inclusive as to be obscure). Still, he is onto something. Whatever the word for the asphalted nodes he calls "edge cities," we're talking about homes here. And offices. We're talking about place, and the way of life stemming from it; about how the American landscape now hosts new environments as slickly packaged as Smartfood. "First there was downtown," as the book jacket puts it. "Then there were suburbs. Then there were malls. Then Americans launched the most sweeping change in 100 years in how they live, work and play." Welcome once more to Edge City, a working wonderland plunked down in our ad hoc environment.

For all the hyperbole and boosterish tone of Garreau's pop geography, he is only the latest and flashiest student of the built environment trying to explicate the decade's "middle landscape," as Peter Rowe puts it. Names from "sprawl" to "urban village" have long described portions of our fragmented way of settling, or unsettling, America. Two generations ago, H.G. Wells predicted such auto-based nodes on the map of America. "Post-urban cities," he called them. Frank Lloyd Wright worshiped them as Broadacre City. Recent historians have named them, too: *Borderland* was John Stilgoe's word for an earlier but parallel form; "technoburbs," Robert Fishman called the last of his *Bourgeois Utopias*. A conference on "Emerging Cities" in Bellevue, Washington, an urban wannabe, adds to the nomenclature with "outer city." Phrases like "satellite city" and "corporate Disneyland" grow, though no one has applied them on the scale of Garreau, who groups airports, "areas," "corridors" and such places as Kendall Square (adjacent to urban M.I.T.) as samples of these highway-based architectural assemblages.

Admittedly, precision is tough. Observers here and elsewhere are at a loss when seeking to create a clear image of these nebulous retail-industrial parks, these agglomerations or zones of emergence, built at the crossroads of the interstates in the past decade or so. What is their connection to the place called home? What, in fact, is the place called "home," now that most Americans live so far removed from cities as to make their suburbs no longer sub-urban?

Who would have thought that the innocuous question "Where are you from?" could have provoked this sort of identity crisis at the end of the millennium? Once we could say where we lived, and with the saying, know something about our government, our past, ourselves. Now, to-ing and fro-ing and idling along the exit ramp to reach what Garreau feels are monuments to American ingenuity, the

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sense of place is so slight it adds to our derangement.

"The suburbs of Washington, D.C. mingle in Maryland around Columbia with those of Baltimore," writes the scholarly geographer Jean Gottmann in his new book, *Since "Megalopolis."* "Through the Princeton corridor in New Jersey, the extensions of New York City merge with those of Philadelphia; the continuity of urbanization from Tokyo southward envelopes Kawasaki and Yokohama."

Who can count the number? Or describe the landscape as urban, suburban or exurban? Not Gottmann, the man who invented the word "megalopolis" to describe another phenomenon, of greater amplitude and use. His *Megalopolis* (1961) gave us a hybrid of space and semantics; he drew a mental map and (as all good metaphors may do) created a new sense of ourselves in portraying the BosWash corridor thirty years ago. (In the '90s the phrase "Los Diego" has emerged to describe the same kind of corridor between Los Angeles and San Diego.)

"How should we count in these cases," Gottmann asks, with "seven metropolises of more than a million each or three multimillion conurbations?" "The Opening of the Oyster Shell," he titles the introduction, which describes the central city spillover since his earlier book.

We are all perplexed. More than perplexed by this new generation of no places, as the nucleus known as the city and the corner called neighborhood becomes defined by the travails of, say, *Boyz N the Hood*. Gottmann calls this product of diffusion by motoring exurbanites "counterurbanization . . . a vast little differentiated, semiurban tissue." Garreau is more sanguine as he looks at the shiny wasteland ruled by the Sun City Posse. But what is Sun City, the largest "adult community in the world," west of Phoenix, with its 183-member police force, ten shopping centers, 46,000 residents, libraries, parks, swimming pools, art museum, crisis-counseling hotline, fire department and symphony? Is it private or public? Urban or suburban? Who knows? Is it democratic or fascistic? Who indeed knows what to call these proto-governments? Is Edge City soulless or a testament to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Garreau gushes in both directions, and his vacillating is irritating enough to undermine the information in his book.

The search for a lexicon is more than mere semantics: The quest for a name is the quest for a place. And Garreau, logging in with 124 pages of vocabulary lists, place lists, index and bibliography, becomes less useful in trying to chart the environment left by the avaricious, free-wheeling 1980s.

First we build. Then we define. Or try to. *Making a Middle Landscape*, Peter G. Rowe's look at the way we have filled the space between country and city since World War II, is always more sober and sometimes more serviceable as a straightforward categorization and assessment of the phenomenon. *Far From Home*, Ron Powers's narrative, is a more personal and polemical look at "Life and Loss in Two American Towns." Both try to do the same job of plotting our unplanned path.

Rowe's book charts the ground more dryly than Garreau's. *Making a Middle Landscape* records the new frontier filled, pod by pod, dollar by dollar, in recent decades. His is a more architectural view of that vast no man's or (to get into another issue) every woman's land where the asphalt covered by auto is the reigning condition of both lives and landscapes. Rowe, chair of the department of urban planning and design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, constructs a text or pattern book to discuss and improve the desolate sprawl of these parasitic sites built along the armature of the highway after World War II.

For all Rowe's insights and his welcome detailing of the design features, his book makes for episodic reading rather than a text for our time. However, even though the book doesn't flow and the overall narrative is interrupted by a mind-boggling number of in-text citations, he offers thoughtful notions and useful chapters on highways and byways, "retail realms" or "corporate estates."

Powers's book tracks the alternatives to Edge City in two old-style towns. He hangs a black ribbon on Kent, Connecticut, a gentrifying farm town where he summered, and Cairo, Illinois, the classic sin city, a ravaged port town fractured by 1960s racism and untouched by an old-time community organizer with his messianic skills. "Can American towns survive our modern era?" is the nagging question his book addresses. He sighs for the "troubled cities, generic suburbs and interstate macadam" that wrap the continent. The contrast with edge cities like Irvine, where "the birds are a problem," or the Houston Galleria, larger than Amsterdam, should be clear. The threat to Powers's pastoral groves is compelling.

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Powers knows this. Kent, one archetype, has been on a "seven-year spree of real estate binging." Its plight is demonstrated in the end by a farmer's son who forsakes his role as a volunteer for Kent's fire department to work a 911 line serving thirteen neosuburban towns. Cairo, the other, is striving to become a national showcase of heritage regenerated, an idea as outworn as its seedy prophet. Powers's reportorial skills are solid and his writing graceful. Somehow, though, his saga fails to sustain the reader's attention; for all his personalizing and passion these tales are twice told and not riveting. Perhaps because one never believes the corpse will rise, his narration becomes a dirge. Or perhaps, as in all these books, the astonishing lack of good photographs fails to give dimension to the sentiment they share.

And, yet, while none of these works is satisfactory in itself, spliced together they do at least confront our national identity crisis. They substantiate our nostalgia for Main Street, U.S.A., and our distaste for the job done by the (now deposed?) Masters of the Universe. Even Garreau, with his moral waffling on these centers of sprawl, has to endorse a denser, less car-bound—more citified—Edge City for tomorrow in order to swallow the lack of urbanity. He insists that these globs—larval, he calls them—are the early stages of something better and will someday fill in, to an urban fare-thee-well.

Others looking at the same evidence are more wary. "Beware of projections in time and generalizations in space," says Gottmann. How likely is it that "mutations" (Gottmann's word) that are "monuments to maximation of the individual ego and monuments to profit" (Garreau's) will follow some 500-year-path from the "amorphous boomtowns" of yesterday to the Amsterdam of the future? Not everyone sees Garreau's "healthy regard for greed" as a social and architectural glue to create context.

Half a dozen years ago, such perimeter places, "the boundaries of which are defined by the locations [Americans] can conveniently reach in their cars," produced an easy life, wrote Robert Fishman, the neologizer of "technoburbs." Today, when one of the spouses he described works at an industrial park two exits down the interstate, and the other works five exits the other way, when the kids he saw sitting in buses sit and sit while the family travels endlessly to the mall on weekdays to prepare for an arduous journey to the second home fifty miles away, the drive isn't so easy. And neither is the living. The countryside is six years the worse for Edge City's exactions.

Greed and ego applied to the landscape have produced Powers's towns. Whipped by poverty or churned by the influx of prosperous travelers seeking vacation bedrooms, they are tokens of the landscape traumatized by unleashed growth. Where once we worried about congestion and concentration (the 1920s), we now worry about diffusion and decentralization. The worry expressed here is all to the good, if these glossaries and texts serve to describe—and hence ameliorate—the lifeless artifacts we have planted on the landscape.

Together, these authors depict a nation switching from brawn to brain, looking for affordability and anchors. They show industrial cities becoming "information age cities." They acknowledge the rambunctious growth. They record the greed. Aptly but sadly, they also reflect the passive acceptance of these two unhappy elements in the American character. "We invent ourselves by the choices we make," *Edge City* puts it. And, of course, by the ones we don't. □

Come Together

PAUL MATTICK JR.

HIS OTHER HALF: Men Looking at Women Through Art. *By Wendy Lesser. Harvard. 294 pp. $24.95.*

The subject of her book, Wendy Lesser tells us in an introductory chapter, is "men's relationship to the feminine" as it "comes out in works of art." She is concerned equally with both aspects of this subject—men's relation to women, and art—which she wishes to defend against academic, and particularly feminist, criticism. Feminism, in the form especially of "the current climate of gender-theory obsession," is the basic target because of its simplistic reduction of the male-female relationship to an image of hostility and to a therefore inadequate understanding of the human self. Here art above all offers an alternative vision, for art "must contain both conflict and resolution." Male artists "can venture into women and still remain male," while "any woman who has ever loved a book or a painting or a film by a man takes a part of him into her." Thus in art the truth of the mutual necessity, however conflictive, of masculinity and femininity can be seen.

A narrative emblem of this truth (and the source of her book's title) Lesser finds in the tale told by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*, in which love is explained as the desire of the two halves of creatures cut in two by the gods to find each other again. Her other inspiration is Freud's account of the child's development of a sense of self through the narcissistic love of another—first of all, the mother—in whose responses the child learns to see itself. Although Freud is for the most part represented in Lesser's book by followers like Lacan, Kohut and above all Winnicott, and the myth of Narcissus replaced by Plato's invention, her viewpoint remains of psychoanalytic inspiration: As she would have it, the lost half each person seeks is the one lost at birth; each of us hopes throughout life "to recapitulate something like" the original closeness with mother in our "intimate relations with other human beings." For the male artist, then, "the feminine" will always mean something of which one was once part and which is therefore always part of one, even though fateful separation has made it something deeply alien.

Thus an early chapter studies stories told by writers (Dickens, Brodkey, Handke, Lawrence) about sons and mothers, with an eye to the way in which the distance between these two "is akin to the distance between adult self and child self, between the self who experiences and the self who remembers, between the man who lives in the world and the man who writes about that life," which suggests that writing is an act not entirely unlike giving birth. A chapter on Degas's images of female bathers examines a man's vision of women alone, while one on Hitchcock discusses the treatment of male-female couples in a number of his films. There are other chapters on novels by George Gissing and Henry James, poetry and criticism by Randall Jarrell, photographs by Cecil Beaton and, finally, two women of the cinema, Marilyn Monroe and Barbara Stanwyck, in their relation to writers, directors and viewers.

The ambition implicit in this range of subjects is apparent, and the reader of this book will encounter insights on many of

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these topics. The book as a whole, however, does not rise to that ambition. Lesser is unevenly successful with her different materials. The chapter on James is persuasively illuminating, and the discussion of Hitchcock is consistently thought-provoking (though often unconvincing). But the chapter on Monroe is a mess, for the most part not about "men looking at women through art," and (for instance) providing no evidence for the claim that the actress was her onetime husband Arthur Miller's "alter ego, into whom he gazed seeking the answers about himself, as she did into him." And the one on Jarrell never develops the initial identification of that writer's conception of his professional split between critic and poet as one between masculine and feminine personae.

The stronger and weaker chapters share a number of problems, which are responsible for the generally unsatisfactory character of the whole. Lesser is, as she herself says, deeply ambivalent about the issue of gender, which she sees as "an insurmountable barrier that one must nonetheless try to surmount." This ambivalence seems both the spur to her work and a barrier to its success. Her annoyance with feminism (which she for some reason represents as a rather ideologically monolithic enterprise), because of what she sees as its separatism and insistence on an abstract female solidarity uninflected by the concrete relations of individual existences, blocks her appreciation of ideas in feminist theory that might be of real utility to her. Lesser tends to use "feminine" and "masculine" as self-explanatory, timeless terms; she sees no use for the insight, announced in the modern feminist literature as long ago as de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, that "the feminine" is a mythology, the secret of whose shape must be looked for in social history as well as in psychological experience, in which in any case history is present too. Pursuing the topic of men's art about women, Lesser tells us, she discovered other pairs: onlooker and participant, "the willed creature of mind and the less conscious soul of being; . . . the public character, located in history, and the private character, defined psychologically and individually; . . . the high arts and the popular arts." Although it stares her right in the face, the gendered character of all these dichotomies, and their use in the creation of ideologies of gender, are put to no use here in the investigation either of the idea of masculine/

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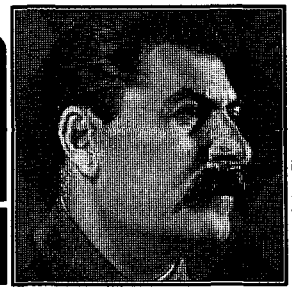

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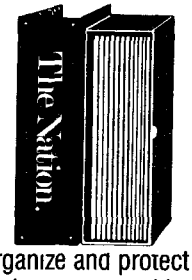

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feminine or of the workings of art.

An understanding of the latter is ruled out in any case by Lesser's rejection of any historical approach to the meaning of artworks. It is of course true that, as Lesser says, we respond to works of art "from our own position in time," whenever they were created. But to leave it at that is not only to accept the limitations of our time-set viewpoint as absolute, and to close ourselves off from other modes of experience. It is also quite inadequate for Lesser's purpose, which is to study works as expressions of their creators' attempts to deal with whatever they conceive of as "the feminine." This evidently requires reconstruction of the artist's point of view, to which a current reader's or viewer's response may not afford much access. Her treatment of Preston Sturges's *The Lady Eve*, for instance, sees the Henry Fonda character in that film as exhibiting simply "the everyday human sins of self-righteousness, snobbishness, pomposity and self-engrossment," along with a "fear of worldly, sexy women." But this is to forget the specifically Depression-era context of the film. As Elizabeth Kendall clarifies so well (in her learned and delightful *The Runaway Bride*), Fonda's sins are not abstractly human and masculine but those of a "rich boy," and the development of his relationship with the Barbara Stanwyck character cannot be fully understood without bearing this in mind, along with the conventions of Depression comedy in general.

In the discussion of Degas's nudes, to take another example, Lesser makes the insightful point that as the artist "shifted from historical to modern subjects . . . he also shifted his attention from the male figure to the female figure. . . . For Degas, women were the heroes of modern life, the figures whose actions mattered—and those actions were the gestures of daily living." She fails to ask why it was bathers, prostitutes, dancers and laundresses who drew Degas's particular attention as female subjects, although her own reference to Baudelaire's idea of the heroism of modern life should have alerted her to the centrality of prostitution to this group of types (Baudelaire expressed a central preoccupation of the period in declaring women on display for men, and therefore most perfectly prostitutes, to be the female incarnations of the heroism appropriate to a commercial society). Lesser takes Degas's remark that in his pictures of bathers he shows women "deprived of their arts and affectations, reduced to the level of animals cleaning themselves" to express transcendence of his own maleness: As they become animals, he becomes "a combination of eye, heart, and hand," freed from history, cultural context and even the demands of his own body. This not only renders incoherent Lesser's own suggestion that women could exemplify a distinctively modern heroism for Degas; it also amounts to willful ignorance of the meaning such a phrase was likely to have for Degas and his fellows, who thought of women generally and women devoted professionally to male pleasure in particular as literally closer to the animal estate than the bourgeois males who saw through "their airs and affectations."

In her treatment of Degas, Lesser reveals a fantasy of her own: "It is a sign of the grace granted to Degas that he, a man in corporeal life, could escape himself for his task as a painter." This "grace" she explains both as a transmutation of sexual feeling into an aesthetic and emotional eroticism, and as a divorce of sexuality from the issue of gender. Indeed, if gender is overcome—as, Lesser suggests, in art it can be—then sexuality will no longer mean the physical desire of men and women for each other but a more diffuse or spiritualized feeling. She identifies this feeling clearly, as "the desire of a small infant for its mother, or a mother for its small infant, at a phase when sexuality has not yet become conscious and gendered." While specific to the analysis of Degas, this dissolution of gendered sexuality seems an ideal pervading the book as a whole, at any rate definitive of art if not of everyday life. In her comments on *The Lady Eve*, for instance, Lesser describes Stanwyck's relation to Fonda as based on that of a mother to her child, suggesting as the crown of adult love "the idea of innocence beyond experience."

In this regard, Lesser's use of Plato's myth of the origin of erotic love is notable for what it leaves out: Aristophanes' explanation that this passion came into being with the invention of genital sexuality. While according to this account it is not "mere sex" but the desire to be reunited that is the reason lovers take such great joy in being with each other, the pleasure of sex is the source of our desire to love each other, and it is in sex that union is achieved. (Plato is careful to recognize the existence of more sexual possibilities than those between men and women; in Aristophanes' myth, female and male doubles cut in half seek their reconstitution, as do the oppositely sexed ones. This aspect also is missing from Lesser's retelling, though she deals interestingly with the relation of Cecil Beaton's homosexuality to the place of "the feminine" in his work.)

In her concluding chapter Lesser comes back "to the idea that great art, whether produced by men or by women, leaves behind the categories of 'masculine' and 'feminine.'" Male artists who do not succeed in this, in her view, have failed as artists rather than in their attitudes toward women. It would be going too far to say that this largely expresses a particular desire to find in art a second infancy, "beyond experience," in which the ambivalences and dilemmas of sex and gender may be resolved. But however this may be, one need not argue for specifically "masculine" or "feminine" modes of creativity to question the analytic force of Lesser's view. One need only acknowledge the central role of gender distinctions in our culture, distinctions that inescapably shape both the conflicts and pleasures of love and the characters and powers of the arts. □

VIDEOS.

BEN SONNENBERG

The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant

"You don't know what love is," sang Ray Charles. Talleyrand said, "Love is a reality in the domain of the imagination." *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, made in 1972, is a seriocomedy about homosexual love. In its tragic vein it takes the blues line and in its comic the French. It offers a conception of the terror and complication and pity of human lives and concludes almost with a wisecrack. Its recent release on videotape (New Yorker Films Video) is a cause for joy.

Fassbinder, who lived from 1945 to 1982, made forty-three movies in just seventeen years. His best movies were made rapidly. They have the quality of handwriting, drawing, notation. In the movie theater this brio was sometimes distracting. On tape it's possible to see how well structured his movies are. Fassbinder's biggest commercial success was *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978); *The Bitter*

Ben Sonnenberg is the author of Lost Property: Memoirs & Confessions of a Bad Boy *(Summit Books).*

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Tears is my favorite. A passionate and lucid film, it goes to the heart and is witty. It is a chamber work (literally, it takes place in one small room), and it fits well on the TV screen.

A dress designer, Petra von Kant (Margit Carstensen), "hates men, *hates* men, detests men," like Mrs. X in Strindberg's *The Stronger*. She is 34; her marriage broke up three years ago. "He stank. He stank like a man. When we ate together . . . his chewing. . . . It was like an explosion," Petra tells her friend Sidonie (Katrin Schaake). "He wasn't unfaithful. Adultery wouldn't have been a reason to separate. . . . We wanted to live a greater love." They "weren't interested in a safe marriage and all the constraints that go with it." What went wrong? asks Sidonie. For one thing, Petra says, my success.

Petra's success owes a lot to the work of her assistant, Marlene (Irm Hermann). "Assistant"? Marlene's relation to Petra is one of abject subjection. She is the embodiment of a harsh, vulgar point made by Petra about freedom and love: that they cannot coexist. Marlene is always bringing in trays, kneeling to her mistress to put on her shoes, going for the mail, for the papers, and typing, incessantly typing. She speaks not one line. She and Petra were lovers, and Marlene's love for Petra is the film's deepest, strongest, most constant strain.

Sidonie asks, Isn't there a freedom that comes from observing the rules? That isn't freedom, says Petra. She is contemptuous of all such traditional "feminine" stratagems. At most they give only power, she says; more often, only control. Petra lies from the start of the movie. All she does is false. She lies chiefly, she thinks, to authority: her mother, her ex-husband, her clients. Her falseness is romantic: She is an artist. Lying preserves her. She puts on lies like makeup. While she talks to Sidonie, the camera circles round and round, as Petra makes up her eyes and face, to show that she (like Sidonie) is in bondage to lies. Because she is an artist, Petra thinks she is a subversive. She is herself subverted by Karin (Hanna Schygulla), introduced by Sidonie.

When *The Bitter Tears* opened in the United States in 1976, Penelope Gilliatt wrote in *The New Yorker* that Fassbinder, like Brecht, "believes in the distance that can be provided by the comic. He is troubled by the gurus of life, as he is by all master-slave relationships. . . . He would like to see his characters escaping their traps." Fassbinder, who called his movie "a case history" and dedicated it to "One who became another Marlene," must have intended it to be both an atonement with and manumission of Irm Hermann. His relation to her was like Petra's to Marlene—only worse. By comparison to them, Auguste Rodin and Camille Claudel, Bertolt Brecht and Ruth Berlau were pacific models of sexual equality and artistic comity.

Throughout the movie, Fassbinder's camera goes to a photo mural of a seventeenth-century-style painting that fills one entire wall. It depicts a male nude at the center; a drunken satyr asleep to one side; next to him a drunken female nude; next to her a drunken infant; and at the back on the other side, a noble male figure gazing up adoringly at the naked man, his penis conspicuous. Each character in the film is seen now and then in relation to one of these figures. The visual complications of these cross-references, which are conspicuous but not clumsy, tell a parallel story, and that's part of what makes *The Bitter Tears* such a pleasure to watch on tape, where you can stop and go back easily and "reread" the film.

As the story develops, Marlene helps Petra prepare her seduction of Karin and is present throughout the scene. Karin tells Petra, I am lazy (and doesn't she look it, too?). Petra replies in exactly the terms she rejected in her conversation with Sidonie: One *needs* rules, constraints, discipline. *Discipline!* Nothing in life, in art is possible without it. . . .

ARRANGEMENT

"Perfection is terrible, it cannot have children."
S. Plath

In arranging flowers the trick
is to subdue the feuds
while keeping the conversation lively.

The florist bargains in bouquet assortments.
I try to find the common ground—
the school-girl collars of the daisies,
torch songs of the red tulips.

An infusion of baby's breath has been much
overused, but laurel provides a neutral zone
that is acceptable if not profound.

How does anything know its kind?
The poodle wagging at the bloodhound.
I can bend this day lily and this iris

toward each other, this iris cut
from the cloth of night's first sky.
Is this perverse? I was told I'd make

a terrible mother, and in fact I'm worse.
Snip the stems to get the correct
variation in their heights. A botanist could tell
relations at the cellular level,

what makes the flora
flora, not random impulse to design,
with respiration opposite of mine.

These hues were not created for my pleasure;
they had a mission. I traverse.
The challenge is to give each one its perfect
position in the arrangement

so they look like true kin
grinning for the camera at a family reunion,
a harmonious group in my dry universe.

Jeanne Beaumont

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To Petra, all about Karin says, Mold me, protect me, take me. To Karin, Petra in fact declares, I'll make you famous, I'll teach you things, we'll learn together, move in with me, forget about money worries, what beautiful skin you have. . . . "Marlene!" she shouts. "Champagne!"

Soon Karin and Petra are living together and Karin is the one in control. Karin withholds and Petra begs. Meanwhile, Petra has made Karin a successful fashion model. And then Karin leaves. She leaves to join her husband in Frankfurt. She leaves but first asks for 500 marks. Go, you're nothing but a slut, Petra says, "a disgusting little creature. . . . I'll be so lonely without you." Karin: "Lonely without a slut?"

In Petra's scene after the abandonment, Fassbinder keeps the camera at floor level, his shots always both concentrated and eventful. Petra, drinking gin straight from the bottle, curses and calls pathetically for Karin: "You disgust me! . . . And I love you so! I'm mad about you! If you knew how it hurts!" Which seems to be the climax of the classical tragic structure of the story.

But it isn't, and that's just one of the things that make this a wonderful film. The climax comes with Petra's try at re-seducing Marlene and is proof that, just as Plato said, the great tragic and great comic poet are one.

In *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* the acting is uniformly good; Carstensen, Hermann and Schygulla are superb (Schygulla never better). The movie is a twin of Fassbinder's *Fox and His Friends* (1974), which is about male homosexual love. That is also available on videotape, as are *Gods of the Plague* (1969), *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (1971), *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Veronika Voss* (1981) and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1979-80). It's a shame *Effie Briest* (1972-74) and *Mother Küsters' Journey to Heaven* (1975) aren't on tape. You can see *Chinese Roulette* (1976), *Despair* (1977), from Nabokov's novel, and *Querelle* (1982), from Genet's, though none of these are successful to me. But I do recommend *A Man Like Eva*, with Eva Mattes playing Fassbinder, by the director Radu Gabrea. It shows something of Fassbinder's brilliance, as well as his sadism to Hermann and others in his acting company. Most of these films can be found in a good mail-order video catalogue, if not at your local Blockbuster. □

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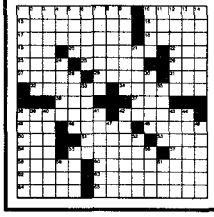

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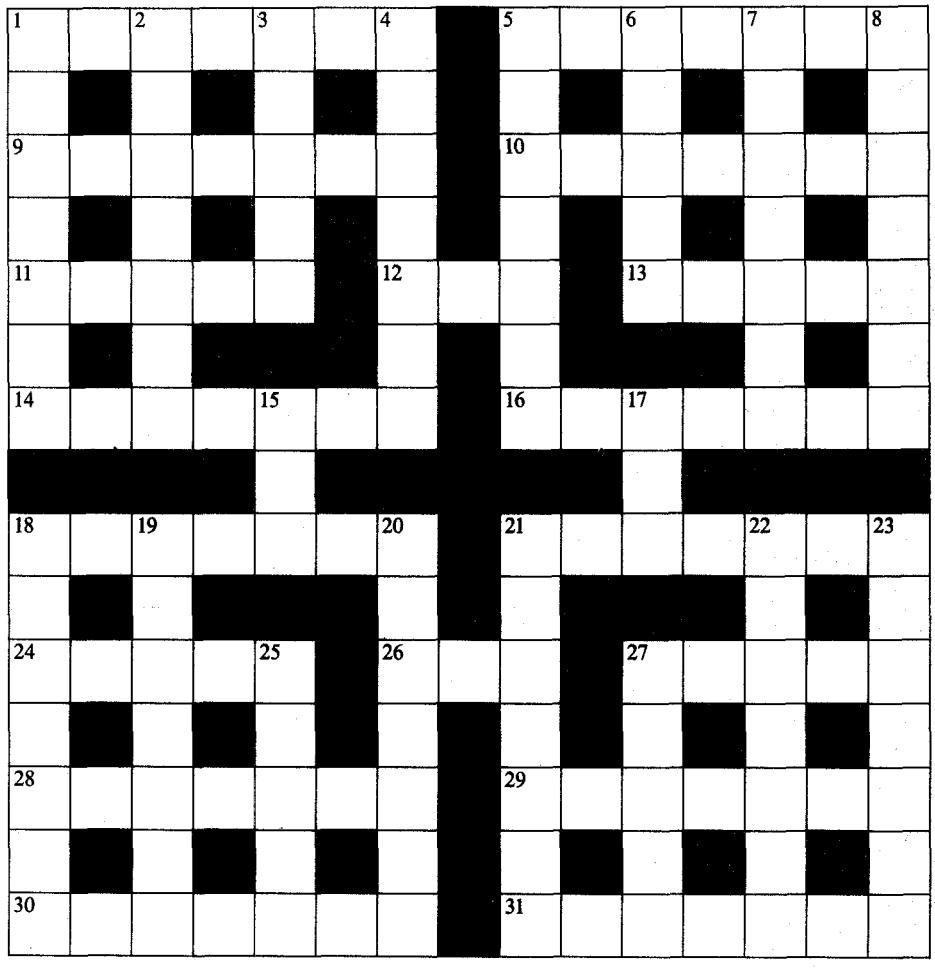
Crossword Puzzle No. 2353

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1, 12 and 5 More specifically like one who enjoys salt, pepper, and spices, etc. (1,3,3,3,7)
9 Notices stick-in-the-mud likes? (7)
10 Finished everywhere. (Gore adorer?) (3,4)
11 Did one or two joints have the right angle if you did this? (5)
12 See 1 across
13 See 3 down
14 A lousy egg, and the fixed price of fertilizer, perhaps. (7)
16 O winged wild bird, you're just like a duck! (7)
18 Italics are not even as a matter of opinion! (7)
21 Gogol is responsible for getting the hired dancers here. (7)
24 and 26 A relative of Bambi's father in the dress of a frontiersman. (8)
27 See 5 down
28 It could be a let-up on what might be considered rich. (7)
29 What some young folk listen to on the box? Not quite true, but Browning thought it careless! (7)
30 One whose mate is salty employs flowers. (7)
31 19 books for those coming rather close to the precipice? (7)

DOWN

1 Mr. Ladd is about to inquire of a real North American. (7)
2 In support of the chair, give guns to the remainder. (3,4)
3, 13 across and 15 down One type that is over a buck is foremost material to the worker. (5,8)
4 Give a different appearance to something when hers is awkward to copy. (7)
5 and 27 across What hoop snakes are incorrectly thought to do like butterflies. (12)
6 Lear's reconstructed place more likely to be associated with painting. (5)
7 Peep, perhaps, coming up to poetry? (That's the other side of the coin!) (7)
8 and 21 Move forward in waves, Schwarzkopf! (He's told people to stop smoking!) (8,7)
15 See 3
17 and 25 Mush is what should get them moving! (3,5)
18 What might leak out after a depth charge is just below the surface. (7)
19 You might have one that's checking a story! (7)
20 Indians are stated to be up North and down South. (7)
21 See 8
22 Some flowers certain to be at a time to repent, as they say. (7)
23 Methodically arranged procedures might be messy around such a short street. (7)
25 See 17 down
27 What someone in the office might have done to record what your blood was, according to someone else. (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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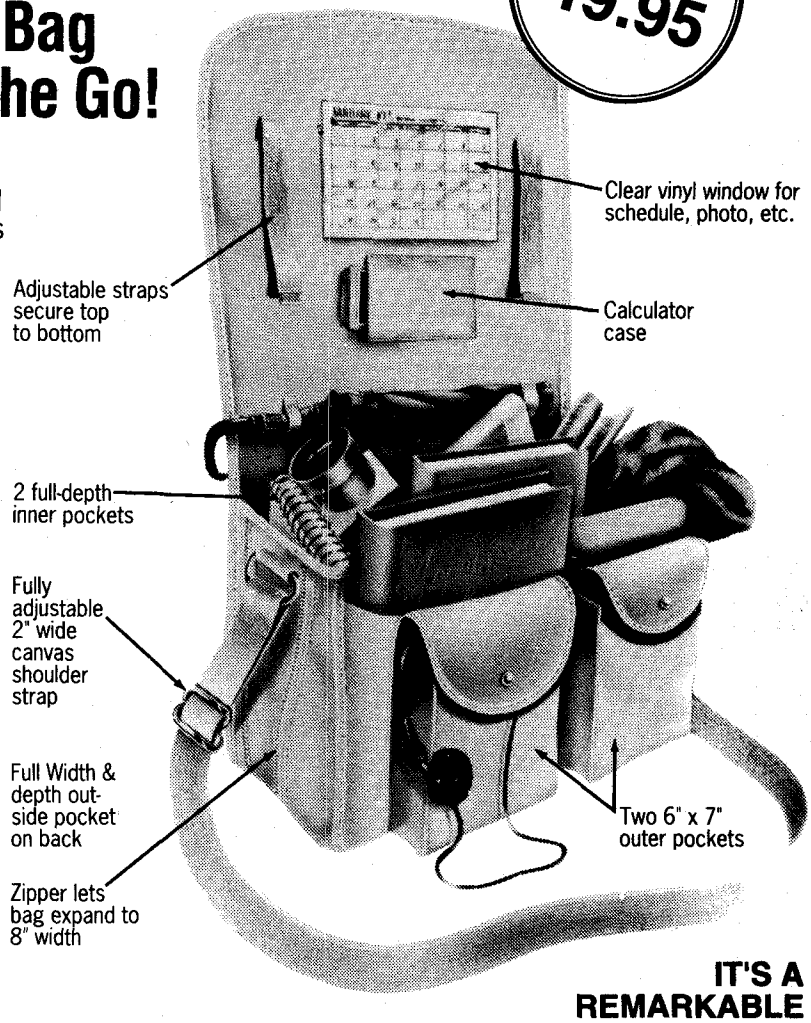
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